Jan. 30,1989

THE NEW YORKER

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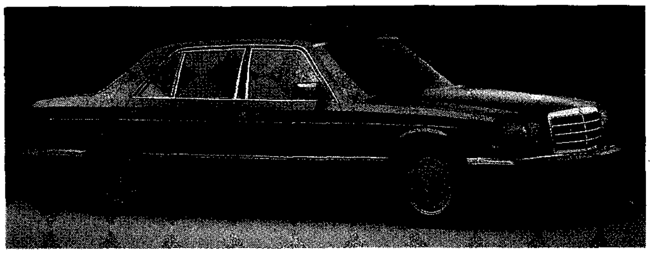

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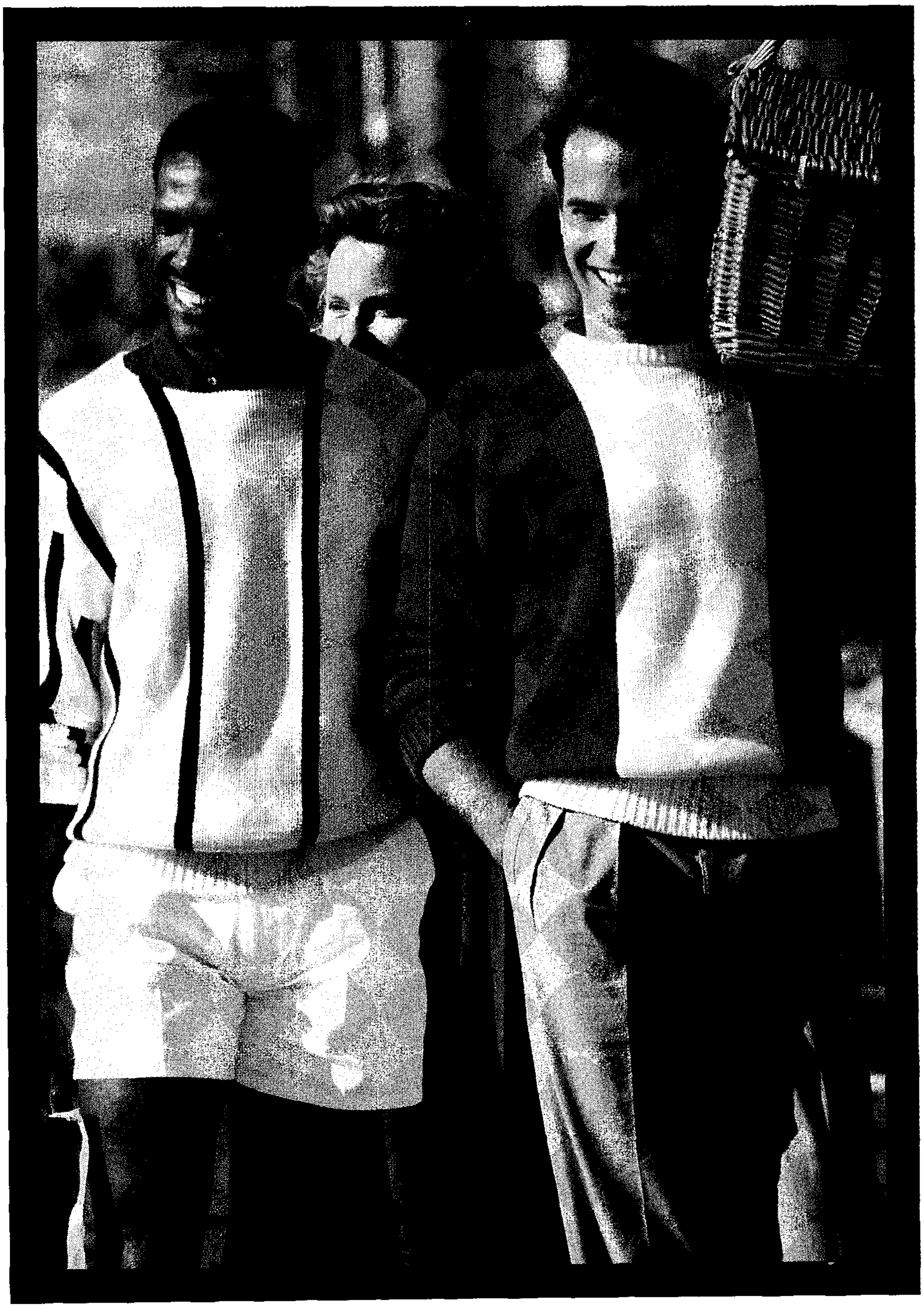

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THE NEW YORKER

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

PLAYS AND MUSICALS

Black and Blue—A revue of black-American music and dance, with a company of forty-one singers, dancers, and musicians. Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith are among the singers, and the dancers include Bunny Briggs, Ralph Brown, Lon Chaney, and Jimmy Slyde. Previews Jan. 24-25. Opens officially on Jan. 26. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:15. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Born Yesterday—Edward Asner and Madeline Kahn in a revival of Garson Kanin's 1946 play. Directed by Josephine R. Abady. Previews through Jan. 28. Opens officially on Jan. 29 at 6:30. (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

The Cocktail Hour—A dramatist returns to his native city in upstate New York to break the news to his prosperous family that he has written a play about them and to ask their permission to have it produced. More easily said than done. A. R. Gurney's humor has never been more sparkling, his characters never more convincing or engaging. The play is as sensitive as it is funny, and the actors do it full justice, under Jack O'Brien's direction. Nancy Marchand gives a marvellous performance as the hero's mother, and Holland Taylor, Bruce Davison, and Keene Curtis are fine, too. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/7/88.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

The Devil's Disciple—A tame production of Shaw's dashing melodrama. (11/28/88) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

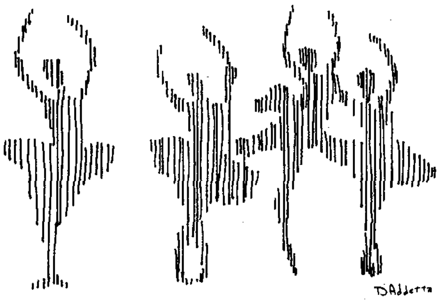
Eastern Standard—An imitation comedy that is as tedious as it is trendy. (11/14/88) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

Enrico IV—After a head injury, an Italian nobleman thinks he is a medieval monarch and lives accordingly. Pirandello wrote this witty, satiric study of madness and masquerade, and, under J. Ranelli's direction, not one moment of it goes to waste. The actors, among them Paul Hecht, in the title role, and Robert Stattel, as a psychiatrist, do well, but the play's the thing. It has been eloquently translated by Robert Cornthwaite and beautifully mounted by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg (scenery) and John Gleason (lighting). (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2.)

Equity Library Theatre—A revival of **TOMFOOLERY**, the 1980 revue of Tom Lehrer songs, is the fourth in this season's series of eight productions. (103rd St. and Riverside Dr. Nightly, except Monday, at 8. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 2:30. Closes Jan. 29. For information about tickets, for which contributions are requested, call 663-2028.)

Forbidden Broadway 1989—A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. The performers are Toni DiBuono, Roxie Lucas, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath—inspired mimics all. (9/26/88) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8:30; Saturdays at 7:30 and 10:30; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3:30.)

Happy Birthday Mama—A black comedy by Roberto Cossa, an Argentine playwright. Preview Jan. 25. Opens Jan. 26, and will run through Feb. 26. Performances are in English Wednesdays through Fridays at 8; in Spanish Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30 and 8. (Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)



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The Heidi Chronicles—Wendy Wasserstein's new play looks at first glance like standard baby-boom playwriting fare, but some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing enables her to capture, lampoon, and transcend her generation all at the same time. With a superb cast, led by Joan Allen. (12/26/88) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

H.M.S. Pinafore—Presented by the New Sadler's Wells Opera, a British company in its American début. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Jan. 24 at 8; Jan. 25 at 1 and 8; Jan. 26-27 at 8; Jan. 28 at 2 and 8; and final performance Jan. 29 at 3.)

I Could Go On Lip-Synching!—This one-man variety show made up of cultural arcana is kind of weird, kind of quirky, and kind of brilliant. Performed by John Epperson and written by him and Justin Ross (who directed), it uses the rhetorical tactics of drag theatre to attack some of the Big Questions, managing not so much to raise lip-synching to an art as to transform aural montage into psychodrama. Certainly, this is the strangest show in town. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556. Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays at 8:30, and Saturdays at 7 and 10.)

Legs Diamond—A musical built around Peter Allen, the only man in America less charismatic than George Bush. Mr. Allen put this show together like a leveraged buyout, and it has no book, no lyrics, and no good songs or dance numbers. The best that can be said of his co-star, Julie Wilson, is that she seems completely out of context. Warning: This one isn't even a hoot. (1/9/89) (Mark Hellinger, 237 W. 51st St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Light Opera of Manhattan—Presenting Romberg's **THE STUDENT PRINCE.** (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays at 2 and Saturdays and Sundays at 3:30.)

Manhattan Punch Line—Opening performances of a festival of new one-act comedies, running through Feb. 26. "Wonderful Party!," by Howard Korder; "Gettysburg Sound Bite," by Ted Tally; "One Monday," by Matt Cutugno; "Seven Menues," by David Ives; and "Sex Lives of the Superheroes," by Stephen Gregg: Jan. 23-24 at 8 (previews); Jan. 25 at 6:45 (opening); and Jan. 29 and Jan. 31 at 8. . . . ¶ "The News from St. Petersburg," by Rich Orloff; "Requiem for a Heavy Weight," by Mark O'Donnell; "Seeing Someone," by Laurence Klavan; "Pillow Talk," by Peter Tolan; and "Good Honest Food," by Bill Bozzone: Jan. 26-27 at 8 (previews); Jan. 28 at 6:45 (opening); Jan. 29 at 3; and Feb. 1 at 8. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Negro Ensemble Company—"We" is the umbrella title for a pair of plays by Charles Fuller—"Sally" and "Prince"—about recently freed slaves during the Civil War, some of them at loose ends and others in the Union Army. The plays are non-vintage Fuller, but they're interesting all the same. The acting is of N.E.C.'s usual high quality, with Michele Shay and Samuel L. Jackson in the title roles. Douglas Turner Ward directed. The plays will alternate weekly, with both scheduled on Sundays. "Prince": Jan. 25-29; "Sally": Jan. 29 and Feb. 1-4. (1/9/89) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 246-8545. Wednesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 8:30; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Wednesdays at 2, Saturdays at 3, and Sundays at 2:30.)

The Night Hank Williams Died—A play by Larry L. King. Opens Jan. 24. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Our Town—Spalding Gray's monotonous and cynical performance as the Stage Manager almost blights this revival of Thornton Wilder's masterpiece, but there is good work by Roberta Maxwell, Peter Maloney, Frances Conroy, Penelope Ann Miller, and Eric Stoltz. (12/19/88) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Phantasie—A play by Sybille Pearson, directed by John Rubinstein. (Vineyard Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 683-0696. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Rumors—This farce about a party to celebrate a couple's tenth anniversary (the host and hostess are mysteriously absent) may well be the funniest play that Neil Simon has ever written. It is acted to perfection by Christine Baranski, André Gregory, Mark Nelson, Ron Leibman, Lisa Banes, Joyce Van Patten, Charles Brown, and Cynthia Darlow, under the impeccable direction of Gene Saks. (11/28/88) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

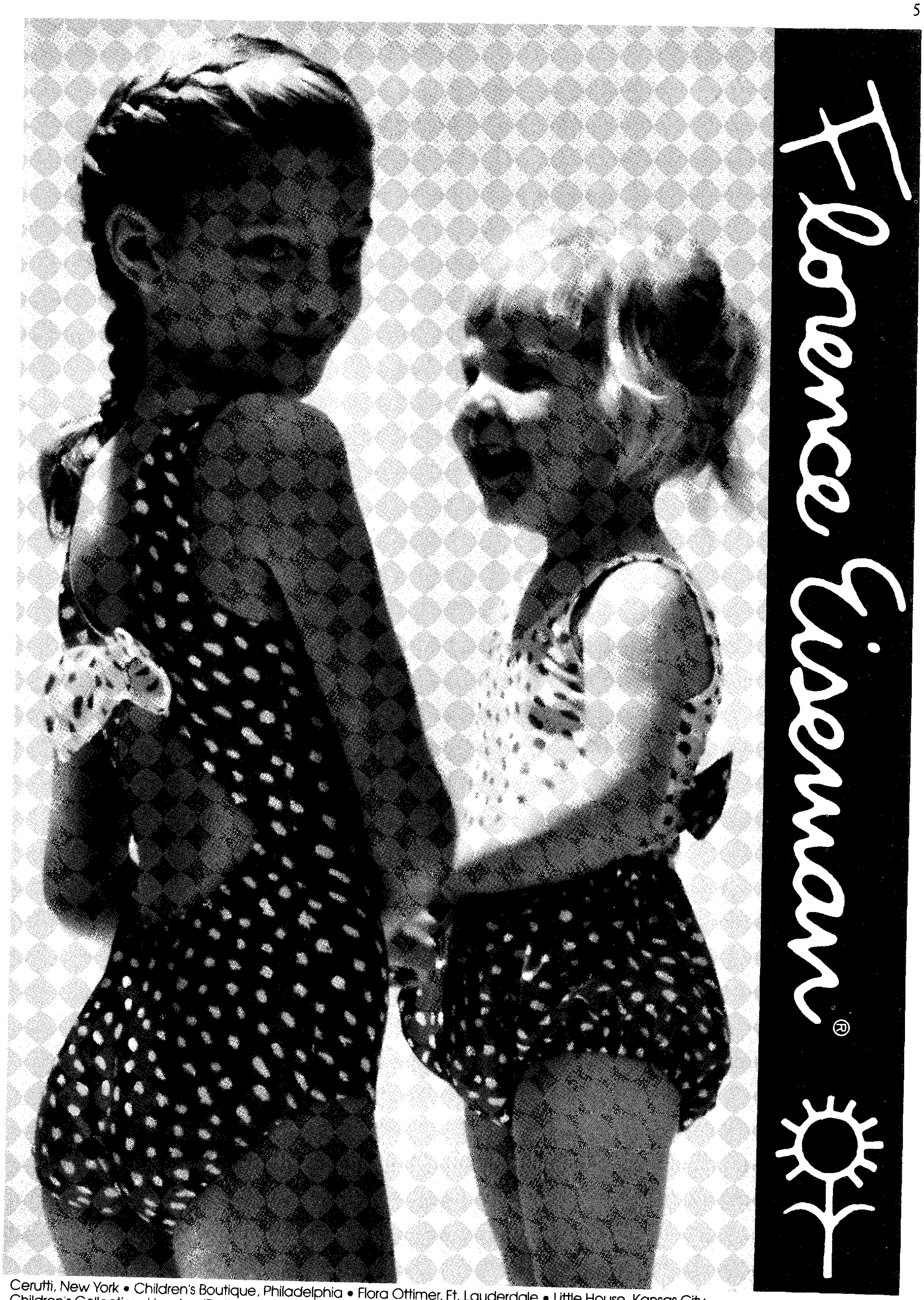
Sweethearts—Antoinette Mille and Walter Adkins in a musical tribute to Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226. Tuesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Wednesday and Friday at 2:30, and Sunday at 3. Closes Jan. 29.)

A Tale of Two Cities—Everett Quinton in a one-man contemporary version of Dickens' novel, commemorating, no doubt, the bicentennial of the French Revolution. Presented by the Ridiculous Theatrical Company. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, One Sheridan Square. 691-2271. Thursdays through Sundays at 8.)

'Tis the Morning—A play by Ruth Beckford and Ron Stacker Thompson. Miss Beckford is in the cast; Mr. Thompson directed. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 869-3981. Thursdays through Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

York Theatre Company—Presenting **MAX AND MAXIE,** a new play by James McLure. (2 E. 90th St. 534-5366. Jan. 25 and Jan. 27 at 8, Jan. 28 at 3 and 8, and final performance Jan. 29 at 3.)

Long Runs—**ANYTHING GOES:** This exuberant revival is primarily a celebration of Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Patti LuPone, Anthony Heald, Bill McCutcheon, and Howard McGillin, does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to the sets and costumes of John Napier. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. Mondays



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THE THEATRE–Cont'd

through Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **A CHORUS LINE:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know *everything about all of them.* (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **DRIVING MISS DAISY:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE:** Kathy Bates and Tony Campisi in Terrence McNally's enchanting comedy about sex and the sudden onset of love in an apartment on Tenth Avenue. Miss Bates and Mr. Campisi leave the cast after Jan. 29. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Wednesdays at 2:30 and Sundays at 3.) . . . **INTO THE WOODS:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful or funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **M. BUTTERFLY:** David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play, with David Dukes and B. D. Wong. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **ME AND MY GIRL:** An infelicitously rehabilitated British musical out of the thirties. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The real stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **OIL CITY SYMPHONY:** Mike Craver, Mark Hardwick, Michelle Horman, and Mary Murfitt, gifted and sophisticated singers and instrumentalists, appear as a quartet of dedicated hicks reuniting at their small-town high school in this very funny musical. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **SARAFINA!:** This South African musical, an explosion of talent, was conceived, written, and directed by Mbongeni Ngema, who also, with Hugh Masekela, composed and arranged the score. The acting, dancing, and singing, to a local form of popular music called Mbaqanga, are a wonder. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana and consists mainly of the often amusing, wisecracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 6 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

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MISCELLANY

ICE SHOW—The "Ice Capades," with Jill Watson, Peter Oppegard, and some skating California Raisins. (Madison Square Garden. 563-8300. Jan. 25-27 at 7:30; Jan. 28 at 11, 3, and 7:30; and Jan. 29 at 1:30 and 5:30.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Jan. 24 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Bugaku," and "The Concert." . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "The Four Seasons," and a work performed by students from the School of American Ballet. (A benefit performance; for tickets, call 870-0600.) . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8: "Ivesiana," "Piano Pieces," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "Ivesiana," and "Piano Pieces." . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 2: "Donizetti Variations," "The Waltz Project," and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: "Interplay," "Symphony in Three Movements," and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 1: "Donizetti Variations," "Tarantella," "The Concert," and "The Chairman Dances." . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 7: "Raymonda Variations," "Piano Pieces," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 8: "Mozartiana," "The Waltz Project," and "Fancy Free." . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "The Chairman Dances," "Sonatas and Interludes," and "Fancy Free." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 26.)

FELD BALLET—A six-week engagement opens with performances of "The Consort," "Intermezzo No. 1," and "Skara Brae" on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 at 8. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 12.)

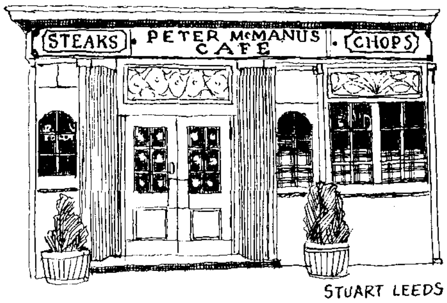
BASEL BALLET—In the first two of seven performances. Jan. 31 at 7:30: "La Fille Mal Gardée." . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 8: "La Belle Vie." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Through Feb. 5.)

MOISEYEV DANCE COMPANY—A hundred and thirty-five dancers and musicians from Moscow. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 757-3100. Jan. 24-27 at 8; Jan. 28 at 2 and 8; and Jan. 29 at 3.)

ZEROMOVING DANCE COMPANY—Two programs of contemporary dance. Program A: Jan. 24 at 7:30, and Jan. 26 and Jan. 28 at 8. . . . ¶ Program B: Jan. 25 and Jan. 27 at 8, and Jan. 29 at 2 and 7:30. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

CREACH/KOESTER—A two-man contemporary-dance team. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 26-28 at 8, and Jan. 29 at 3.)

NOTE—The New York City Ballet is presenting a series of discussions on "the collaborative nature of the creative process." Jan. 23 at 6: Ballet Master-in-Chief Peter Martins and Assistant Ballet Mistresses Susan Hendl and Christine Redpath. Selma Jean Cohen is the moderator. . . . ¶ Jan. 30 at 6: Miami City Ballet Artistic Director Edward Villella and dancers Carole Divet, Lindsay Fischer, Jean-Pierre Frohlich, and Kyra Nichols. Robert Gottlieb will moderate. (New York State Theatre. For information about tickets, call 870-5677.)



STUART LEEDS

NIGHT LIFE

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—In the lobby, people come and go talking of the Forty-fourth Street Chowder and Marching Club, which used to meet here, and of Lerner and Loewe, who knocked out "My Fair Lady" here, and of **HARRY CONNICK, JR.,** a young, slick-haired, tradition-minded pianist and singer, who is doing "Avalon" and "My Romance" and other oldies in the Oak Room. Shows at nine-fifteen Tuesdays and Wednesdays and at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen Thursdays through Saturdays. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A big, soigné cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, in the heart of the fur and fashion-student districts. Wednesdays through Saturdays at six-thirty, **JOHN WALLOWITCH** sings a lament for pre-Lloyd Webber Broadway and a song in praise of his teeth (which a theatrical agent—who, he alleges, operated out of a delicatessen off the Mosholu Parkway—told him he had to have jacketed if he wanted to make it in show business) and his number about a drag queen ("Bruce," made famous by Blossom Dearie) and a roundelay (dedicated to diction experts Edwin Newman and Edward Koch) in which a common mispronunciation of "ask" figures ("Do I love you? Don't aks"). **PEGGY LEE,** whose soft, low, slinky, subtle voice age has not withered, will be here for three weeks starting Jan. 31.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The long-gone midtown pleasure dome (1949-65) after which this airy two-tiered operation is named had a midget m.c. named Pee Wee Marquette, caged finches, and Bird himself; the new room has waiters and waitresses in Reeboks and bow ties, a rainbow-colored Wurlitzer jukebox, neon wading birds, and jazz people of various modern schools. **RONNIE CUBER,** a baritone saxophonist who does some rowdy honking for Steve Gadd's R. & B. band, leads his own combo Jan. 27-28. Music from nine Sundays through Thursdays and from nine-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—On the back wall of this jazz club there's a neon version of the Manhattan skyline, with a crescent moon and two stars attendant upon it—one of the best examples of inert-gas folk art we know of. The eminent **OSCAR PETERSON** sails up and down the keyboard, leaving few notes untouched, Jan. 24-29; bassist Steve Wallace and drummer **BOBBY DURHAM** accompany him. Music from nine. Dining.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Music for many kinds of people, including unreconstructed folkies, rock-and-roll fundamentalists, Village bopcats, and C. & W. fans. **EDDIE RABBITT,** a New Yorker who lit out for Nashville in the late sixties and had a bunch of country-pop hits in the late seventies and early eighties, performs on Jan. 27. **KRIS KRISTOFFERSON,** who worked his way up from Rhodes Scholar to recording-studio janitor to writer and singer of seedy-romantic barroom ballads to matinée idol, will be here Jan. 28-29. Folk guitarists **JOHN RENBOURN** and **STEFAN GROSSMAN** hold forth on Jan. 30. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A crowded, duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists and bassists compete for your ear with professional conversationalists. Truth and beauty usually prevail. **RED MITCHELL,** a stellar bassist who plays piano on the side (in the late forties, before he joined Woody Herman, he served as the pianist in Chubby Jackson's big band), works with **NORMAN SIMMONS** through Jan. 28 and with **JOHN CAMPBELL** on Jan. 29. First set at nine-forty-five. Dining.

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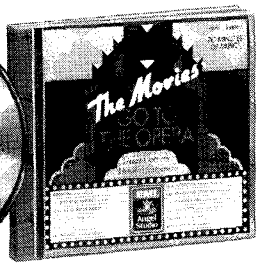

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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

3260)—Pretty much everything about this jazz room is nice: the long rows of tables covered with pink linen, the bijou bandstand, the view from the bar of the bandstand, and the view out the window of Vaux & Withers' gabled Victorian courthouse. **JAY MC SHANN**, who arrived in New York forty-seven years ago with a Kansas City big band that included Charlie Parker, is here with a quintet Tuesdays through Sundays, playing piano (blues and boogie-woogie laced with Tatum) and singing a little. Mondays belong to a quartet led by tenor saxophonist **BIG NICK NICHOLAS**. Music from nine-thirty.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel spa known as the Café Carlyle is the winter home of **GEORGE SHEARING**, the London-born pianist famous for his cool, light touch and his puns and the jaunty way he sings "You're the Pits" (an upside-down version of the Cole Porter hymn) and the dry way he does "I Went to a Marvellous Party." Sets at ten and midnight Tuesdays through Saturdays. (Mr. Shearing will be away Jan. 27-28; Marti Stevens fills in for him.) . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CAT CLUB, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—This room, which caters to thrash-metal buffs and cooler heads on weeknights, opens its doors on Sundays to swing-music fans, most of whom come to Lindy. Feet jitter, skirts twirl, and smiles break out everywhere. The New York Swing Dance Society organizes these gatherings; on Jan. 29, it brings in the **WIDESPREAD JAZZ ORCHESTRA**, a youngish ten-piece band that delivers Ellington and Lunceford and Chick Webb with flair. Music from eight.

DELTA 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A long, rambling bar and restaurant with a white-trash-chicken-shack theme. The decorator went kind of hog-wild with all the old filling-station and soft-drink signs and the collection of hubcaps and the dime-store portrait of the King and the display of dozer caps and the obituary of Bear Bryant from the U. of Alabama *Crimson White* (a two-page spread, half of which is a photo of the coach's plaid hat on an old red leather chair)—but it's a friendly enough place. There's live music every night, including gospel on Mondays and country on Fridays. **CHARLOTTE BROWNE**, a young New York-born singer who favors skintight leopard-spotted dresses and saucy blues by Helen Humes and Alberta Hunter, holds forth Jan. 24; on Jan. 26, **LOUP GAROU**, a lively New York-based zydeco quintet, plays music to two-step to. Shows after nine. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads (a.k.a. Cajun popcorn), and other exotic Southern fare.

EAGLE TAVERN, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—An Irish bar in the meat-packing district, not too far from the boondocks. The back room, trimmed with seaworthy things, has traditional Hibernian sounds and native string-band music on the weekends. On Jan. 27, **JERRY O'SULLIVAN** plays jigs and reels on his uilleann pipes. **SKYLINE**, a New York newgrass band led by banjo man **TONY TRISCHKA**, performs on Jan. 28. Music from nine.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through a heavy-duty steel door, through a green Plexiglas door, down a long, narrow, fun-house passageway (mirrors in which you can watch yourself multiply; corrugated-metal siding you can riffle), and down a flight of stairs, you'll find this velvet-and-mirror-walled *boîte*. **MOSE ALLISON**, the white-haired Mississippi-born pianist, singer, and country sophisticate, will be around Jan. 24-29, doing his wise-guy songs ("Your Mind Is on Vacation," "Your Molecular Structure"), his public-service songs ("Ever Since the World Ended," "Everybody's Crying Mercy"), other people's blues, Jimmie Davis's 1940 gubernatorial campaign song ("You Are My Sunshine"), and, perhaps, some Nat (King) Cole lounge material. **ASTRUD GILBERTO**, a flower of the early-sixties bossa-nova movement, begins a week-long visit on Jan. 31. Mondays are reserved for guitarist **LES PAUL**. Music from eight. Dining.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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FORTUNE GARDEN PAVILION, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—Two things not known to be available in the next world—Chinese food and American jazz—can be found here, under a greenhouse roof giving onto a patch of midtown sky. The piano, a Steinway that sits grandly in the middle of the room, will be in the graceful, subtle hands of bebop master **TOMMY FLANAGAN** Jan. 24-29. Bassist **GEORGE MRAZ** will be at his side. **ADAM MAKOWICZ** brings in a trio on Jan. 31. Music from eight-thirty Mondays, from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, from eight Fridays and Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

INDIGO BLUES, 221 W. 46th St. (221-0033)—A new jazz club, in the basement of the Hotel Edison. It's awash in blue neon, and has a fancy sound system and a shiny dance floor. Miles Davis, the moodiest trumpeter in the land, christened the place last month; it was his first night-club appearance since 1975. **ARTHUR BLYTHE**, a protean alto saxophonist, leads a quartet Jan. 24-29. **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI'S** big band works out on Mondays. Music after nine.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Turn-of-the-century New York Sunday *Herald* posters and Hirschfeld caricatures on the walls, and, next to the brass-railed partition between the bar and the dining room, a modern Steinway. **JUDY CARMICHAEL**, a stride devotee, is on duty Jan. 24-28. **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE**, whose assorted talents (she plays piano and accordion, has a voice of impressive size, and does campy variations on a red-hot-mama theme) have made her a favorite both downtown and uptown, will be on view Sundays and Mondays. Music from nine-thirty.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor retreat (attained by passing through a recently annexed downstairs restaurant) that features avant-garde jazz, advanced and unadvanced rock, and miscellaneous weird sounds. It has a slapped-together, homemade look, and, judging by the S.R.O. crowds, it is a thriving enterprise. The lineup: Jan. 23, saxophonist **FRANK LOWE'S** quintet; Jan. 24 and 31, bassist **REGGIE WORKMAN'S** ensemble; and Jan. 25-29, pianist **ANDREW HILL'S** quintet. Music after nine.

LONE STAR CAFÉ, 61 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. (242-1664)—Texas-like in significant respects, though not in the open-spaces-and-clear-sight-lines department, in which it is New York-like. The schedule: Jan. 25, downtown honky-tonker **NED SUBLETTE** and his big band; Jan. 26, Rubber Rodeo; and Jan. 27-28, Louisiana swamp-music specialist **DR. JOHN** and a Rhode Island blues-rock group called Young Neal & the Vipers. Music after nine. Dining.

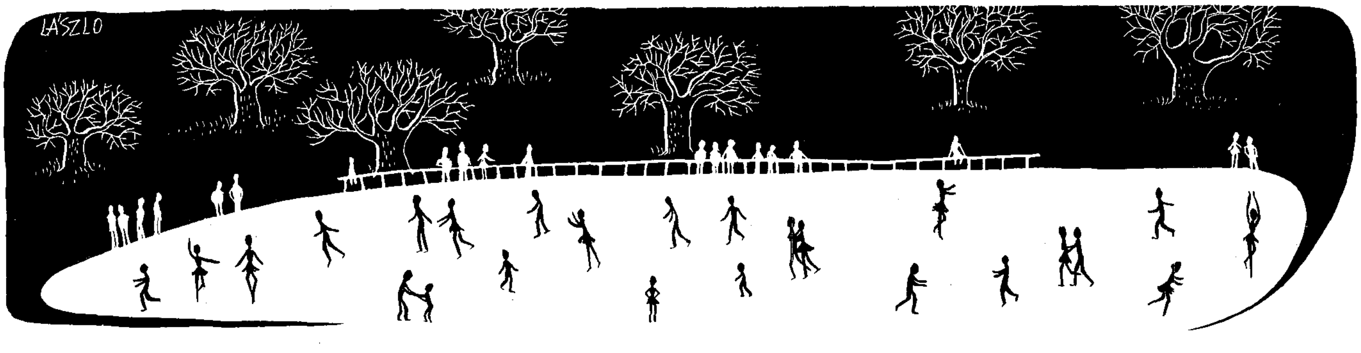
LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—The midtown branch of the aforementioned honky-tonk. It has more space than the parent joint; it also has more mirrors, more fireplaces (two, on the second floor), more carpeting, more Gibson electric guitars serving as wall ornaments, more letters of commendation (posted in the entryway) from Texas dignitaries, and at least as many souvenir T-shirts and ball caps. **MICHELLE SHOCKED**, a young, intrepid folksinger-dissenter (that's her on the cover of "Short Sharp Shocked," her first studio recording, being roughed up by some San Francisco riot police) who writes wonderful songs about the small-town East Texas where she grew up, will be here on Jan. 23; **ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL**, a band of Western-swing revivalists, performs Jan. 25; **KENNY KOSEK'S** string band holds forth on Jan. 26. Music after nine. Dining.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—Henry VIII and a unicorn on the walls, well-heeled cats on the banquettes, and a small band of John Kirby admirers on the podium. **JOHN COLIANNI**, a twenty-four-year-old pianist, and five colleagues re-create the streamlined, tailcoated swing of the John Kirby Sextet, a group that flourished in the late thirties and early forties. (It played plush hotel lounges, like the Pump Room in Chicago's Ambassador Hotel, as well as Fifty-second Street establishments, and it was the first black combo to have a network-radio show.) **LA VERNE BUTLER** sings some of the numbers that Maxine Sullivan, Kirby's wife, did with the band. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine and eleven. Dining. Closed Sundays.

RITZ, 119 E. 11th St. (254-2800)—Up-to-the-minute rock in a half-century-old ballroom. It's a place for people who don't mind taking their rock standing up; the few seats that exist—in the balcony—are reserved for the usual suspects. The **RAMONES**, the mop-topped lads from Forest Hills who have given the world toe-tappers like "I Don't Wanna Walk Around with You" and "Teen-Age Lobotomy," hold forth Jan. 27-28 at eleven.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A musical melting pot: samba bands, African pop bands, reggae people, zydeco outfits, and salsa ensembles all pass through this former luncheonette. **YELLOWMAN**, a Jamaican singer who celebrates himself in just about all of his reggae ditties ("all of de girls, dey say, 'Yellow, you're bold' "), performs Feb. 1-2. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

SPEAKEASY, 107 Macdougal St. (598-9670)—Outside, on the boulevards of Greenwich Village, heedless local youths and tourists from New Jersey make mad music; inside, dulcimers are hammered, fiddles are fiddled, folk songs are sung, and Professor Irwin Corey sometimes pops his head in to explain what a



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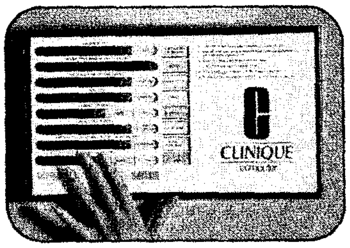

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

light bulb is (a thing that sucks up darkness until it goes out). Folksinger and monologuist **GEORGE GERDES** has the floor on Jan. 28. Music from about eight-thirty. Dining.

SPO-DEE-O-DEE, 565 W. 23rd St., at Eleventh Ave. (206-1990)—A curious mixture of swank and down-home. (The name comes from the 1949 Stick McGhee song "Drinkin' Wine, Spo-dee-o-dee," a piece of rowdiness that was Atlantic Records' first hit.) The food is ribs and chicken wings, the music is mostly R. & B., and the furnishings include ballroom-size chandeliers and king-size sofas. Big Fun, a nine-piece R. & B. band, will be here Jan. 27-28.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Three musicians steeped in the mysteries of hard bop—pianist **CEDAR WALTON,** bassist **RON CARTER,** and drummer **BILLY HIGGINS**—will be in this Village meetinghouse Jan. 24-29. Starting Jan. 31, **CECIL TAYLOR,** a pianist sui generis, takes his trio through his grueling, bruising music. Shows from ten. Dining.

VILLAGE GATE, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—A thirty-three-year-old three-ring circus. The ringmaster, a bearded Village elder named Art D'Lugoff, sometimes employs a barker to steer traffic to his multiple entertainments. In the basement, **DEFUNKT,** a jazz-funk band led by trombonist and vocalist **JOSEPH BOWIE,** performs Jan. 27-28 at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty. Back upstairs, in the Terrace Bar, where business and conversation are often at boom level, pianist **JUNIOR MANCE** and bassist **MARTY RIVERA** are on duty Jan. 24-29 from ten. On Jan. 24, they trade sets with **HELLMAN'S ANGELS,** a string trio whose head angel, **DAPHNE HELLMAN,** plays the harp.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—One of the few places below the surface of New York that deserve landmark status. It's also one of the few places anywhere that have a notable (if that's the right word) light fixture—one that Charles Mingus K.O.'d while trying to reason with the proprietor, and that the proprietor, a preservationist as well as a businessman, decided to leave in Mingus-ized condition. **MICHEL PETRUCCIANI,** a tiny French-born pianist with a rich style that falls somewhere between Bill Evans (his hero) and Keith Jarrett, will be here with his trio Jan. 24-29. (Petrucciani, who is three feet tall, has a bone disease called osteogenesis imperfecta, but his hands are strong and he gives you the impression that he has greater reserves than most hardworking romantic pianists.) Saxophonist and flutist **FRANK WESS,** an old Basie man, comes in with a quartet on Jan. 31. Mondays belong to the **MEL LEWIS** big band. Music after ten.

ZANZIBAR & GRILL, 550 Third Ave., at 36th St. (779-0606)—A midtown jazz resort, where the ceiling fans turn slowly, and the palm trees susurrate tropically, and a waiter pretends that a pepper mill is a microphone and that he can sing like Nat (King) Cole, and another waiter, delivering a plate of fried chicken and maple-pear corn bread to a customer, sings something he's worked up called "Suppertime." The professional musicians tend to come on around nine. They include saxophonist **C. SHARPE** (with a trio) on Mondays; trumpeter **WARREN VACHÉ** (accompanied by the house band) on Jan. 25; and trumpeter **JACK WALRATH** (with a quartet) on Jan. 27-28.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Capellini finanziera, sepia-toned photos of old Firenze, and jazz. The last emanates from a passageway between a front-room bar and a back room reserved for trenchermen. **HILTON RUIZ** and **JIMMY ROWSER** play piano-bass duets through Jan. 28. Sundays are reserved for the guitar-bass team of **GENE BERTONCINI** and **MICHAEL MOORE.** Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven.

JAZZ / ROCK / PERSONAL APPEARANCES / PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

"SHORT TAKES"—Geri Allen, Denise Delapenha, Leroy Jenkins, and Hannibal Peterson performing original works. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 265-4375. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Through Feb. 4.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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29	30	31	1			

WADADA LEO SMITH—With Marty Ehrlich, Adegoke Steve Colson, Rachiim Ausar Sahu, and Juma Santos. (Alternative Museum, 17 White St. 966-4444. Jan. 25 at 8.)

BILLY TAYLOR—With his trio. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 27 at 8.)

ODADAA!—Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Jan. 28 at 8.

SCOTT JOHNSON—Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 30-31 at 8.

DIONNE WARWICK AND JOHNNY MATHIS—Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 757-3100. Feb. 1-4 at 8.

THE KITCHEN—Jan. 25: Yasunao Tone and History of Unheard Music. . . . ¶ Jan. 26: Terry Jenoure and Susan Stenger. . . . ¶ Jan. 27: Semantics and the Jazz Passengers. . . . ¶ Jan. 28: John Zorn and Blind Idiot God. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Evenings at 8:30.)

P.S. 122—Jan. 26-29 at 9:30: John O'Keefe. . . . ¶ Jan. 27-29 at 9: Rocky Bornstein, with Blue Gene Tyranny. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

JOSEPH CORNELL (1903-72)—Twenty collages. Through Feb. 28. (Mathes, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

CHERYL GOLDSLEGER—Recent paintings and drawings of imaginary architectural spaces filled with folding chairs. Through Feb. 4. (Urdang, 23 E. 74th St.)

FREDERICK KIESLER (1890-1965)—Drawings and a model for what he called his Endless House. Through Feb. 25. (McCoy, 19 E. 71st St. A retrospective can currently be seen at the Whitney Museum.)

LE CORBUSIER (1887-1965)—Drawings. Through Feb. 25. (Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St.)

ALFRED H. MAURER (1868-1932) / **DARRYL HUGHTO**—Cubist paintings. Through Feb. 27. / Paintings from the past thirteen years, ranging in style from abstract to figurative. Through Jan. 28. (Salander-O'Reilly, 22 E. 80th St. Open Mondays.)

GEORGE MCNEIL—Recent Expressionist paintings. Through Feb. 2. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

JOAN MIRÓ (1893-1983)—Paintings, sculptures, and ceramics. Through March 25. (Perls, 1016 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

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AVNER MORIAH—A series of paintings based on the Garden of Eden, as well as the artist's more familiar canvases documenting violence in the Middle East. Through Feb. 4. (Forum, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

THERÈSE OULTON—Abstract oils, in the artist's first solo show in New York. Through Feb. 18. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Open Mondays.)

THEODORE ROSZAK (1907-81) **AND CLARENCE H. CARTER**—Paintings and drawings by both artists. Through Feb. 25: (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St.)

GREGORY WILLIAMS—Surreal landscapes. Through Feb. 25. (Cordier & Ekstrom, 417 E. 75th St.)

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

MILTON AVERY (1893-1965)—Oil and watercolor figure studies of the artist's wife and daughter. Through Jan. 31. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

RONNI BOGAEV—Realist paintings of flower arrangements and interiors. Through Jan. 28. (French, 41 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

JAMES BOHARY—Recent abstract paintings. Through Feb. 4. (Prats, 24 W. 57th St.)

ROSEMARIE CASTORO—Figurative sculptures in stainless steel; the copper-colored patina on some of them was done with a torch. Through Jan. 31. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

PHILIPPE FAVIER—Paintings on irregularly shaped glass, reversed so that the mediums (enamels and pigmented cold ceramic glazes) are seen through the glass. Through Feb. 4. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

PATRICIA TOBACCO FORRESTER / ROGER WINTER—Floral watercolors. / Playgrounds in Central Park are one of the subjects of this painter, who uses a Pointillist technique. Through Feb. 1. (Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St.)

MARY FRANK—Paintings on glass, metal, and paper, plus a few sculptures. Through Feb. 18. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

HELEN FRANKENTHALER / HANS HOFMANN (1880-1966)—New paintings. Through Jan. 28. / Paintings dating from the late forties. Through Feb. 18. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

ROBERT GWATHMEY (1903-88)—Still-lifes. Through Jan. 28. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

EVA HESSE (1936-70) / **JOAN NELSON**—Reliefs. / Oil paintings on wood. Through Jan. 28. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

GEROME KAMROWSKI—Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist works from the forties. Through Feb. 4. (Washburn, 41 E. 57th St.)

ROCKWELL KENT (1882-1971)—Paintings, drawings, prints, and ceramics. Through Feb. 4. (ACA, 41 E. 57th St.)

ALUN LEACH-JONES—Recent abstract paintings. Through Feb. 18. (Ross, 50 W. 57th St.)

AGNES MARTIN—New geometric paintings. Through Feb. 11. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

JAMES MCGARRELL—New allegorical paintings. Through Jan. 28. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

JAMES MOORE—Trompe-l'oeil compositions using objects and wrinkled linen. Through Jan. 28. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

VICTOR PASMORE—New abstract paintings. Through Feb. 4. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

IRVING PETLIN—Pastel drawings of amorphous figures in surreal landscapes, mostly; the works were done between 1961 and this year. Through Jan. 28. (Kent, 41 E. 57th St.)

NINA POSNANSKY—Still-lifes and circus performers are among the subjects of expressionistic paintings and works on paper. Through Feb. 11. (Gallery 84, at 50 W. 57th St.)

KARL SCHRAG—Landscapes, still-lifes, and portraits. Through Feb. 8. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

HARRIET SHORR—New large-scale still-lifes. Through Jan. 31. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

ESPHYR SLOBODKINA—Paintings, constructions, and sculptures spanning this abstractionist's career. Through Feb. 1. (Deutsch, 20 W. 57th St.)

Sidney Janis Fortieth Anniversary—Pairings of Giacometti with Mondrian and Arp with Léger in a tribute to the recently retired dealer who pioneered the two-artist exhibition. Through March 11. (110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Sculpture—A two-part show (of five American and five Swiss post-minimalists) that has travelled from museums in Aarau and Lausanne. Through Feb. 10. (City Gallery, 2 Columbus Circle. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays. . . . ¶ Swiss Institute, 35 W. 67th St. Mondays through Fridays, 2 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 2 to 6.)

GALLERIES—SoHo

Conrad Atkinson—New "front-page" paintings, in which the artist offers his version of such publications as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Village Voice*. Also, sculptures. Through Feb. 4. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

Ilan Averbuch—Six sculptures incorporating a variety of materials; two of the pieces contain water. Through Feb. 15. (Hoffman, 429 West Broadway.)

Walter Darby Bannard—New abstract paintings. Through Jan. 28. (Greenberg Wilson, 560 Broadway.)

Robert Barry—Three shows of new paintings: through Jan. 28 at Castelli (578 Broadway) and Pretto (251 Sixth Ave., at Houston St.; opens at 1), and through Feb. 4 at Holly Solomon (724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.; open Mondays).

Rosemarie Beck—Recent figurative paintings based on themes from Yeats and Ovid. Through Feb. 4. (Ingber, 415 West Broadway.)

Arthur Cohen—Abstract paintings on shaped canvases. Through Feb. 11. (Stephen Rosenberg, 115 Wooster St.)

Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979)—Lithographs. Through Jan. 31. (Zarre, 379 West Broadway.)

Michael Eastman—New paintings. Through Feb. 9. (Eno, 164 Mercer St. Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Norris Embry (1921-81)—Expressionist paintings and works on paper. Through Jan. 28. (Esman, 70 Greene St.)

John Ferren (1905-70)—Nonobjective paintings and works on paper. Through Feb. 2. (Perlow, 560 Broadway.)

Yoshishige Furukawa—Abstract paintings and drawings. Through Feb. 11. (Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St.)

Richard Haas—Drawings, models, maquettes, and prints documenting trompe-l'œil murals the artist has undertaken during the last seven years. Through Feb. 4. (Alexander, 59 Wooster St.)

Nancy Haynes—New abstract paintings on wood and linen. Through Feb. 4. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

James Hayward—Thickly painted canvases, many of which are divided up into three or four solid fields of color. Through Feb. 4. (M-13, at 72 Greene St.)

Per Kirkeby—Sculptures, drawings, and prints. Through Feb. 8. (Auchincloss, 558 Broadway.)

Barbara Kruger—New photographic works. Through Jan. 28. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Ronnie Landfield—Abstract paintings vaguely suggestive of landscapes. Through Feb. 8. (Haller, 415 West Broadway.)

Geer Morton—Still-life paintings on canvas and paper. Through Feb. 15. (Twining, 568 Broadway.)

Dennis Oppenheim—For this show, the Gibson Gallery has been transformed into a sort of surrealistic playroom, with such diversions as a pair of bass drums that sound off for no apparent reason and a welding mask that circles endlessly on an electric train. Through Feb. 4. (568 Broadway.)

Richard Pettibone—Sculptures, and paintings offering advice such as "Read Ezra Pound Quick." Through Feb. 4. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

David Rabinowitch—Concentric rings carved into the plaster walls of the Flynn gallery, as part of a sculptural installation. Through April 29. (Flynn, a new gallery at 113 Crosby St.)

Leo Rabkin—Stitched-linen wall pieces from the past year, and painted wall constructions from the forties, fifties, and sixties. Through Feb. 11. (Pearl, 420 West Broadway.)

Alexis Rockman—Fantastic and rather grim paintings of snakes, rats, and deer. Through Jan. 28. (Gurney, 100 Greene St.)

Carol Ross—Wall constructions painted with decorative geometric designs. Through Jan. 28. (A.I.R., 63 Crosby St.)

Maura Sheehan—An installation the gallery describes as a "light-as-air construction of nets and globes." Through Feb. 25. (Facchetti, 476 Broadway.)

Keith Sonnier—Two shows, both through Jan. 28. Late-sixties constructions incorporating such materials as cheesecloth, rubber, and wire mesh at Gladstone, 99 Greene St. . . . ¶ New aluminum-and-neon pieces at Castelli, 420 West Broadway.

Theodoros Stamos—Large paintings. Through Feb. 4. (Dorsky, 578 Broadway.)

Julie Wachtel—New multipanel works by an artist who juxtaposes oil paintings of cartoon characters with silk screens of celebrities. The cartoon characters are borrowed from greeting cards and the celebrities are out of the pages of *People*. Through Feb. 8. (Brown, 560 Broadway.)

Group Shows—At **art 54**, 54 Greene St.: Paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Sarah Plimpton, Fritz Bultman, Cecile Muhlstein, Peter Begley, and others. Through Feb. 5. (Open Sundays.) . . . **the drawing center,** 35 Wooster St.: Works on paper by nine artists. Through Feb. 11. (Open Wednesday evenings until 8.) . . . **sonnabend,** 420 West Broadway: Jannis Kounellis, Robert Morris, and Robert Rauschenberg are showing new pieces. Through Jan. 28.

OTHER GALLERIES

Power Boothe—Recent abstract canvases by an artist who creates a blizzard of strokes by scratching through the paint with the handle of a brush. Through Jan. 28. (Souyun Yi, 249 Centre St.)

Mia Westerlund Roosen—Two floor sculptures made of concrete disks wrapped in sheets of lead. Through Feb. 2. (Burgin, 270 Lafayette St.)

P.S. 1—Can a baroque-era theatrical concept serve twentieth-century art-exhibition purposes? The answer may be found in "Theatergarden Bestiarium," a floor-wide installation of commissioned works by thirteen artists, which includes fountains, a gazebo, a lawn, a mirrored grotto, and films. Through March 12. (46-01 21st St., Long Island City. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Patrick Bailly-Maître-Grand and Irving Pobboravsky—Works by two contemporary daguerreotypists. Through Feb. 2. (Pfeifer, 568 Broadway.)

John Coplans—Views of the artist's hands. Through Feb. 11. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St.)

Elliott Erwitt—A retrospective comprising some hundred and fifty prints. Through March 12. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Oliver Gagliani—A retrospective. Through Feb. 18. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

Larry Johnson—Large photographic works incorporating texts. Through Feb. 4. (303 Gallery, temporary entrance at 127 Spring St.)

Josef Koudelka—Recent urban photographs taken in Eastern Europe, and previous prints of Gypsies. Through March 4. (Pace-MacGill, 11 E. 57th St.)

David LaChapelle—Cibachromes of nudes. Through Jan. 28. (Trabia-MacAfee, 54 Greene St.)

Herbert List (1903-75)—Surrealist-influenced prints spanning the artist's career. Through Jan. 28. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Eve Sonneman—Polaroid photographs. Through Feb. 2. (Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

Group Show—Pictures of gardens by twenty-five photographers, including André Kertész, Elliott Erwitt, Carmen Quesada, and Sylvia

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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ART–Cont'd

Plachy. Through Feb. 15. (Twining, 568 Broadway.)

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The first public exhibition of prints from William Henry Fox Talbot's "Pencil of Nature," the first book illustrated with photographs (each photograph was actually put in by hand). . . . ¶ The Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit. Through Feb. 5. . . . ¶ A show of Sienese Renaissance paintings and manuscript illuminations, including sets of narrative panel paintings which were split up long ago. Among the reunited works are six panels from the altarpiece commissioned from Sassetta by the wool merchants' guild. Through March 19. . . . ¶ All the Ingres works in the collections (ten paintings, twenty-two drawings, and seven prints) have been put on view. Through March 19. . . . ¶ The Costume Institute is exhibiting eighty-five outfits from the Victorian era. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—A show of Walker Evans photographs, most of which appeared in the recently reissued book "American Photographs." (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed until Feb. 11.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A show of American folk art from the center in Williamsburg, Virginia, that is named for Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, whose landmark collection, started in the twenties, identified and brought to public attention such painters (all represented here) as Ammi Phillips, Erastus Salisbury Field, and John Brewster, Jr. Also, carvings, furniture, textiles, and pottery. Starts Jan. 26. . . . ¶ A retrospective of works by Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965), an architect and designer of gallery exhibitions, theatrical sets, and department-store windows. Reconstructed here is his 1942 Surrealist room, designed for Peggy Guggenheim's gallery Art of This Century, in which the objects on view could be touched. A complementary show is at Jason McCoy, 19 E. 71st St. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—A display of lacquerware from China, Japan, Korea, Burma, Thailand, and Iran. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—The new Hall of South American Peoples reconstructs from two perspectives life before the arrival of Europeans. Archeological remains (carved-and-painted ceramic vessels, gold masks) represent Andean rituals, and ethnographic materials (feather headdresses, baskets, hunting implements) illustrate the everyday routines of Amazonian Indian tribes. Each section is also enhanced by models, including an Incan city that was unearthed in the sixties, and five different thatched-palm huts. There are twenty-three hundred objects in all. (Open daily. Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, 10 to 9; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—An exhibit of furniture and decorative arts in the William and Mary style on loan from numerous collections, chiefly those of Windsor Castle; the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam; the Bibliothèque Nationale of France; and the Winterthur Museum. Through Feb. 12. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St.—An exhibition of a type of lacquered wood carving called Kamakurabori, historically used for Buddhist-temple decorations and currently used for household items. Through Feb. 5. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—The golem—a figure in Jewish folklore comparable to Frankenstein's monster—has appealed to artists and writers since at least the sixteenth century and, as this survey makes clear, continues to fascinate today's painters, sculptors, and illustrators, among them Saul Steinberg, Charles Simonds, and Louise Fishman. (Open daily except Fridays and Saturdays. Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—An exhibit of drawings and watercolors that cover the whole range of subjects (landscapes, portraiture, genre scenes) favored by German Romanticism, which flourished between 1780 and 1850. Caspar David Friedrich, Philipp O. Runge, and Adolph Menzel are among the artists. Through Jan. 29. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—A survey of works by Christian Boltanski, a French artist whose sculptures are like time capsules from childhood. Some of the installations are mounted in darkened galleries, evoking the dimness of the past; one is lighted only by six small clamp-on lamps, which focus directly on photographic portraits of high-school students at the Lycée Chases, a Jewish school in Vienna, in 1931. Through Feb. 12. (Open daily except Mondays and Tuesdays. Hours: Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—Collage paintings by Benny Andrews, dating from the fifties to the seventies. Through Feb. 26. (Open daily except Mondays and Tuesdays. Hours: Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MUSIC

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719. Other box-office numbers are included in the listings.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Jan. 23 at 8: "Die Fledermaus," with Barbara Daniels, Erie Mills, Helga Dernesch, Allan Glassman, and Håkan Hagegård; conducted by Julius Rudel. . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 8: "Il Trovatore," with Silvia Mosca, Mignon Dunn, Lando Bartolini, Sherrill Milnes, and Paul Plishka; James Levine. . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 8: "Bluebeard's Castle," with Jessye Norman and Samuel Ramey; and "Erwartung," with Jessye Norman. James Levine conducting both. . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8: "Aida," with Leona Mitchell, Stefania Toczyska, Vladimir Popov, and Alain Fondary; Christian Badea. . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 7: "Don Carlo," with Margaret Price, Tatiana Troyanos, Neil Shicoff, and Bernd Weikl; James Levine. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 1:30: "Bluebeard's Castle," with Jessye Norman and Samuel Ramey; and "Erwartung," with Jessye Norman. James Levine conducting both. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: "Die Fledermaus," with Barbara Daniels, Erie Mills, Helga Dernesch, Allan Glassman, and Håkan Hagegård; Julius Rudel. . . . ¶ Jan. 30 at 7: "Don Carlo," with Margaret Price, Tatiana Troyanos, Neil Shicoff, and Bernd Weikl; James Levine. . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 8: "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," with Ann Murray, Thomas Hampson, and Frank Lopardo; Ralf Weikert. . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 8: "Bluebeard's Castle," with Jessye Norman and Samuel Ramey; and "Erwartung," with Jessye Norman. James Levine conducting both.

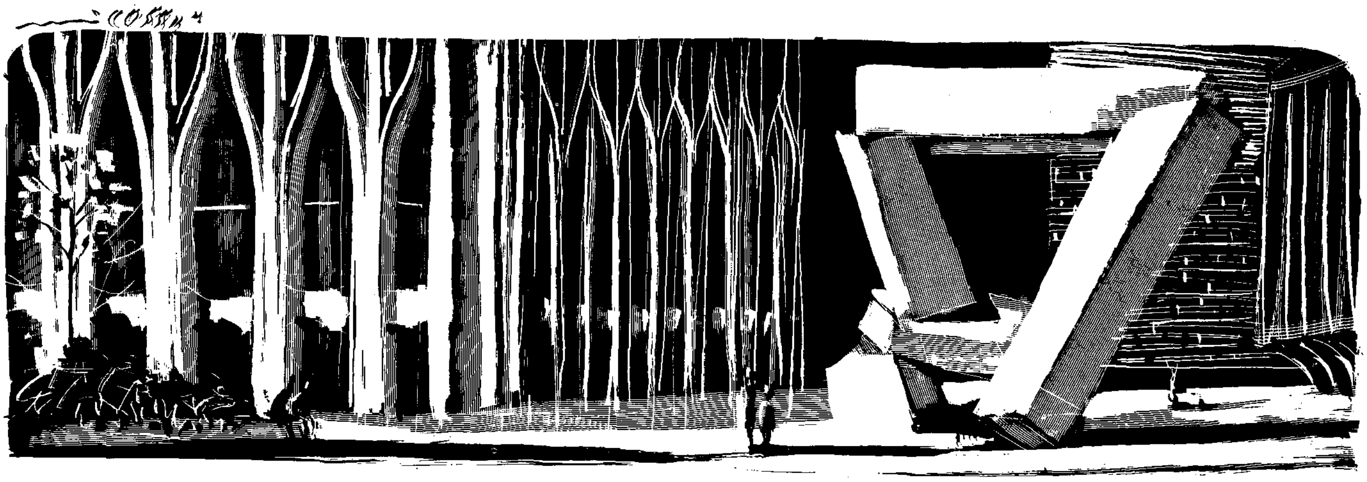
Opera Ebony—Presenting the American première of Poulenc's "Le Gendarme Incompris," and Gian Carlo Menotti's "The Medium." Daniel Swift will conduct. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 690-4100. Jan. 27 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 24 at 8: Zubin Mehta conducting music by Paine and Strauss, with Susan Dunn, soprano. . . . ¶ Jan. 26-28 at 8: Zubin Mehta conducting an all-Sibelius program, with Itzhak Perlman, violin. . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 8: Hugh Wolff conducting music by Bernstein, Ravel, and Berlioz, with Peter Serkin, piano.

Johann Strauss Orchestra of Vienna—Alfred Eschwe conducting "Viennese favorites." (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 25 at 8.)

Cleveland Orchestra—At Carnegie Hall, Christoph von Dohnanyi conducting. Jan. 26 at 8: A Delius-Tippett-Beethoven program. With Daniel Majeske, violin; Robert Vernon, viola; and Stephen Geber, cello. . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 8:



A Mozart-Busoni program. With Garrick Ohlsson, piano, and the men of the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: Music by Bartók, Villa-Lobos, Bach, and Varèse. With Kathleen Battle, soprano.

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Lukas Foss conducting, with Carlo Bergonzi, tenor, and the chorus from Il Piccolo Teatro dell'Opera. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Jan. 27-28 at 8, and Jan. 29 at 2.)

On Original Instruments Chamber Orchestra—Malcolm Bilson conducting the first performance of this augmented version of his chamber group. With Samuel Ritchie, violin. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 25 at 8.)

Concordia: A Chamber Symphony—Marin Alsop conducting. With Clark Terry, jazz trumpet. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 26 at 8.)

Juilliard Orchestra—Paul Zukofsky conducting a program of music composed in the sixties. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 27 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York Chamber Orchestra—Constantine Kitsopoulos conducting. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 31 at 2.)

Harmonie Ensemble—Steven Richman conducting, with James Kreger, cello. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 1 at 8.)

RECITALS

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Lukas Foss, piano; Ida Kavafian, violin; Cynthia Phelps, viola; David Shifrin, clarinet; and artists of the society playing, among other works, Mr. Foss's composition "Tashi." (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 24 at 7:30.)

Franciscan String Quartet—Music by Haydn, George Rochberg, and Schumann. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Jan. 24 at 8.)

Seymour Lipkin—Piano. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Jan. 24 at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-7515.)

Galina Heifetz—Violin, with assisting artists. (Third Street Music School Settlement, 235 E. 11th St. Jan. 25 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

Musical Elements—Playing works by Paul Moravec, Mel Powell, George Rochberg, and others. With Joan Heller, soprano. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 25 at 8.)

Contemporary Music Concert—With Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano; Gilbert Kalish, piano; Speculum Musicae; the American Brass Quintet; and others. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Jan. 26 at 7:30.)

Mannes Trio—Playing works by Mozart, Dvořák, and Schumann. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Jan. 26 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

American String Quartet—In an all-Beethoven concert. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Jan. 26 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

New Music Consort—Presenting works by George Crumb, Glen Velez, and others in a concert called "Earth-Pulse." (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Jan. 26 at 8.)

Mary Ann Hart—Mezzo-soprano. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Jan. 27 at 8.)

Yale Chamber Music Series—With Donald Currier, piano; Sidney Harth, violin; Thomas Nyfenger, flute; Ronald Roseman, oboe; and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 28 at 8.)

Downtown Chamber and Opera Players—Performing vocal and chamber music by composers who died in concentration camps. (Midtown Y, 344 E. 14th St. 674-7200. Jan. 28 at 8.)

Vladimir Feltsman—Piano. (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 29 at 3.)

Cleveland String Quartet—Playing, among other works, the New York première of Christopher Rouse's Quartet No. 2. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 29 at 3.)

For the Love of Music—Presenting chamber music by Ravel, Scarlatti, Brahms, and Chausson. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 29 at 3.)

Music Before 1800—Presenting Chicago's Newberry Consort, an ensemble of voices and early instruments, in its New York début. (Corpus Christi Church, W. 121st St., just east of Broadway. Jan. 29 at 4. For information about tickets, call 666-0675.)

Stephen Hough—Piano. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Jan. 29 at 5.)

Sue Ann Kahn—Flute. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Jan. 29 at 5:30. Tickets at the door on the evening of the concert.)

Peter Stewart—Baritone, performing, as part of his program, the première of a work by Lee Hoiby, with Mr. Hoiby at the piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 29 at 8.)

Stanford String Quartet—Playing, among other works, the première of William Bolcom's Tenth Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 30 at 8.)

Verdehr Trio—Playing works by Haydn, Charles Hoag, Schubert, and Bartók. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 30 at 8.)

Emanuel Ax and Yo-Yo Ma—Piano and cello, performing works by Stravinsky, Brahms, Chopin, and Lutoslawski. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 31 at 8.)

Tashi—This chamber ensemble of renowned musicians will, in the spirit of *Hausmusik*, choose pieces for their program on the night of the concert. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 31 at 8.)

Barbara Nissman—Piano, in the last of her three-concert series of the Prokofiev sonatas. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 1 at 8.)

Andrew Rangell—Piano, in the fourth of his seven-concert series of all the Beethoven sonatas. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Feb. 1 at 8.)

Aurora—With Bente Vist, soprano, in a program that consists mainly of cantatas by Telemann. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Feb. 1 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Chamber Players of the League/ISCM—Performing works by Eric Chasalow, David Froom, Eric Moe, Ralph Shapey, and Claude Vivier. (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 1 at 8.)

SPORTS

(The ticket-information number for Madison Square Garden is 563-8300, for the Meadowlands 1-201 935-3900, and for Nassau Coliseum 1-516 587-9222.)

Basketball—At **byrne meadowlands arena:** Nets vs. Denver Nuggets, Jan. 24 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Nets vs. Sacramento Kings, Jan. 26 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Nets vs. Philadelphia 76ers, Jan. 28 at 8. . . . **madison square garden:** Knicks vs. Indiana Pacers, Jan. 31 at 7:30.

Hockey—At **byrne meadowlands arena:** Devils vs. Minnesota North Stars, Jan. 23 at 7:45. . . . ¶ Devils vs. Hartford Whalers, Jan. 27 at 7:45. . . . **nassau coliseum:** Islanders vs. Devils, Jan. 24 at 8:05. . . . ¶ Islanders vs. Winnipeg Jets, Jan. 26 at 8:05. . . . **madison square garden:** Rangers vs. Islanders, Jan. 30 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Rangers vs. Washington Capitals, Feb. 1 at 7:30.

Racing—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30.

Trotting—At **yonkers raceway:** Weeknights at 8. . . . **meadowlands:** Nightly at 7:30.

ET ALIA

Poetry and Prose Readings—Irene Worth, Estelle Parsons, and Charles Keating reading from the short stories of Anton Chekhov, Flannery O'Connor, and Robertson Davies. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Jan. 25 at 6:30.) . . . ¶ John Cage reading from his own poetry. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Jan. 25 at 8. Admission by contribution.) . . . ¶ Susan Sontag reading from "AIDS and Its Metaphors." (Endicott Booksellers, 450 Columbus Ave., at 81st St. Jan. 26 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Louise Glück and C. K. Williams reading from their own poetry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 30 at 8:15.) . . . **note:** On Jan. 31 at 7, Ms. Glück will give a lecture called "The Education of the Poet" at the Guggenheim Museum Auditorium, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. No tickets necessary.

Winter Antiques Show—Seventy-four dealers have been invited to display their goods at the thirty-fifth annual show. A benefit for the East Side House Settlement. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Jan. 23-28 from 11 to 9 and Jan. 29 from 1 to 6.)

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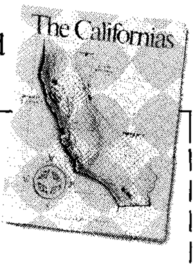

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171; theatre opens in the late afternoon and is closed Mondays.)
Through Jan. 26: "Memories of Prison" (1984; directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese).
Jan. 27: At 6 and 8, "Letters from a Dead Man" (1986; Konstantin Lopushanski; in Russian); and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes" (1985; Barbet Schroeder). Twenty-six of fifty-two segments will be shown.
Jan. 28 at 4:30: "The Singing Detective" (Jon Amiel), with Michael Gambon. The seven-hour British television series, shown complete at one sitting, with an intermission.
Jan. 29: At 4, 6, and 8, "Letters from a Dead Man"; and, at 10, "The Charles Bukowski Tapes."
From Jan. 31: "Letters from a Dead Man."

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Naked Gun" (†).
Theatre 3: "Torch Song Trilogy" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Beaches" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Twins" (†).

Murray Hill, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Through Jan. 26: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
From Jan. 27: To be announced.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mississippi Burning" (†).
Theatre 3: "Rain Man" (Barry Levinson), with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Working Girl" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Jan. 26: "Torch Song Trilogy" (†).
From Jan. 27: "Parents" (Bob Balaban), with Randy Quaid, Mary Beth Hurt, and Sandy Dennis.

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Through Jan. 26: "Tequila Sunrise" (†).
From Jan. 27: "Three Fugitives" (Francis Veber), with Nick Nolte and Martin Short.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Running on Empty" (†). No performances Jan. 30-31.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
Through Jan. 26: "Tucker: The Man and His Dream" (†).
From Jan. 27: "The Chocolate War" (Keith Gordon), with John Glover and Ilan Mitchell-Smith.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas.
Theatre 2: "The January Man" (Pat O'Connor), with Kevin Kline.

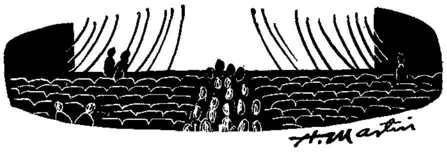
D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)
Through Jan. 26: "The Boost" (Harold Becker), with James Woods and Sean Young.
From Jan. 27: "Physical Evidence" (Michael Crichton), with Burt Reynolds and Theresa Russell.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Twins" (†).
Theatre 2: "Working Girl" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Beaches" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 26: "The Accidental Tourist" (†). From Jan. 27: "Tango Bar" (Marcos Zurinaga), with Raul Julia.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "The Naked Gun" (†).
Theatre 2: "Deepstar Six" (Sean S. Cunningham).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Talk Radio" (†).



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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 16.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†).
Theatre 2: "Rain Man" (Barry Levinson), with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Mississippi Burning" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Twins" (†).

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: "The Naked Gun" (†).
Theatre 2: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 26: "Tequila Sunrise" (†). From Jan. 27: "Three Fugitives" (Francis Veber), with Nick Nolte and Martin Short.
Theatre 2: "Working Girl" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I and 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays theatres open in the late afternoon.)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 24: A program of six new films from Europe, the Soviet Union, and Taiwan. The schedule of showings is complicated; our best advice is to phone the theatre for titles and times. From Jan. 25: "Peking Opera Blues" (†).
Theatre 2: See listings under "Revival Houses."

Bleecker St. Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560).
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 26: "Wings of Desire" ("Der Himmel über Berlin") (†). From Jan. 27: A program of twenty-two animated films from twelve countries.
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 26: "Friendship's Death" (directed by Peter Wollen). From Jan. 27: "Wings of Desire" ("Der Himmel über Berlin") (†).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 2: "Talk Radio" (†).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Through Jan. 26: "Tequila Sunrise" (†).
From Jan. 27: "Parents" (Bob Balaban), with Randy Quaid, Mary Beth Hurt, and Sandy Dennis.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 26: "Twins" (†). From Jan. 27: "Physical Evidence" (Michael Crichton), with Burt Reynolds and Theresa Russell.
Theatre 2: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 26: "Law of Desire" (†) and "What Have I Done to Deserve This!" (†). From Jan. 27: "Salaam Bombay!" (Mira Nair; in Hindi).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 26: "Bagdad Café" (†). From Jan. 27: "Three Fugitives" (Francis Veber), with Nick Nolte and Martin Short.
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 26: "The Thin Blue Line" (†). From Jan. 27: To be announced.
Theatre 4: Through Jan. 26: "Matador" (†). From Jan. 27: "Matador" (†) and "Law of Desire" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 2: "The January Man" (Pat O'Connor), with Kevin Kline.
Theatre 3: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Beaches" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Talk Radio" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Accidental Tourist" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
"Torch Song Trilogy" (†).

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
"Field of Honor" (Jean-Pierre Denis; in French and Alsatian).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)
"The Dressmaker" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"The Last Temptation of Christ" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Rain Man" (Barry Levinson), with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise.

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Pelle the Conqueror" (†).
Theatre 2: "Salaam Bombay!" (Mira Nair; in Hindi).
Theatre 3: "36 Fillette" (Catherine Breillat; in French).

Cinema Studio I and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).
Theatre 2: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Working Girl" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 26: "The January Man" (Pat O'Connor), with Kevin Kline. From Jan. 27 (tentative): "Three Fugitives" (Francis Veber), with Nick Nolte and Martin Short.
Theatre 2: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mississippi Burning" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Naked Gun" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
Theatre 6: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas.
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 26: "Madame Sousatzka" (†). From Jan. 27: "Torch Song Trilogy" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Twins" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 26: "Deepstar Six" (Sean S. Cunningham). From Jan. 27: "Physical Evidence" (Michael Crichton), with Burt Reynolds and Theresa Russell.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).
Theatre 2: "Tequila Sunrise" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 26: "Crime Zone." From Jan. 27: "Parents" (directed by Bob Balaban), with Randy Quaid, Mary Beth Hurt, and Sandy Dennis.
Theatre 4: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 5: "Deepstar Six" (Sean S. Cunningham).
Theatre 6: Through Jan. 26: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†). From Jan. 27: "Buy and Sell."

Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through Jan. 26: "Mississippi Burning" (†).

From Jan. 27: "Three Fugitives" (Francis Veber), with Nick Nolte and Martin Short.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: "Beaches" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Naked Gun" (†).
Theatre 4: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas.

Movieland, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)
Through Jan. 26: "Hellbound: Hellraiser II" (Tony Randel).
From Jan. 27: "Twins" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 26: "Twins" (†). From Jan. 27: "Physical Evidence" (Michael Crichton), with Burt Reynolds and Theresa Russell.
Theatre 2: "The January Man" (Pat O'Connor), with Kevin Kline.

Warner, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)
"Mississippi Burning" (†).

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 26: "The Accidental Tourist" (†). From Jan. 27: "Escape from Safe Haven."

REVIVAL HOUSES

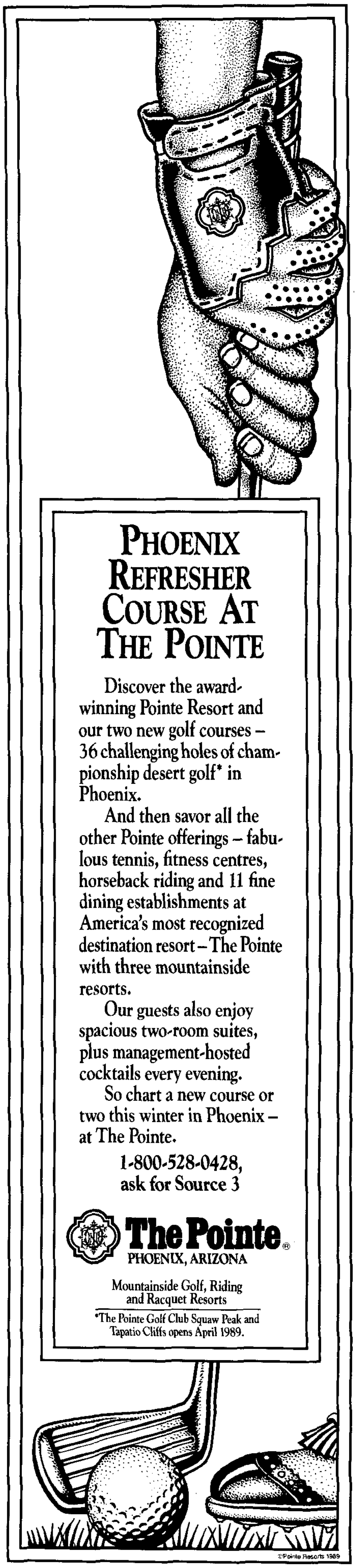
Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Jan. 23: "Hobson's Choice" (1953; directed by David Lean), with Charles Laughton, John Mills, and Brenda de Banzie; and "The Paradine Case" (1947; Alfred Hitchcock), with Alida Valli, Gregory Peck, Charles Laughton, and Ann Todd.
Jan. 24-25: "The Canterville Ghost" (1944; Jules Dassin), with Charles Laughton, Margaret O'Brien, and Robert Young; and "Young Bess" (1953; George Sidney), with Jean Simmons, Stewart Granger, Deborah Kerr, and Charles Laughton.
Jan. 26-28: "The Private Life of Henry VIII" (1933; Alexander Korda), with Charles Laughton, Merle Oberon, Binnie Barnes, Wendy Barrie, and Elsa Lanchester; and "The Barretts of Wimpole Street" (1934; Sidney Franklin), with Norma Shearer, Fredric March, and Charles Laughton.
Jan. 29-30: "Ruggles of Red Gap" (1935; Leo McCarey), with Charles Laughton, Mary Boland, Roland Young, Charlie Ruggles, and ZaSu Pitts; and "The Suspect" (1945; Robert Siodmak), with Charles Laughton and Ella Raines.
Jan. 31-Feb. 1: "Advise and Consent" (1962; Otto Preminger), with Henry Fonda, Don Murray, Burgess Meredith, Franchot Tone, and Charles Laughton; and "Tales of Manhattan" (1942; Julien Duvivier), with Charles Boyer, Ginger Rogers, Paul Robeson, Edward G. Robinson, and Charles Laughton.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through Jan. 24: "Two for the Road" (1967; Stanley Donen), with Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney; and "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961; Blake Edwards), with Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, Patricia Neal, Martin Balsam, and Mickey Rooney.
Jan. 25-26: "The Conformist" (1970; Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda; and "The Last Metro" (1981; François Truffaut; in French), with Catherine Deneuve, Gérard Depardieu, and Jean Poiret.
Jan. 27-28: "Fatal Attraction" (1987; Adrian Lyne), with Michael Douglas, Glenn Close, and Anne Archer; and "9½ Weeks" (1986; Adrian Lyne), with Mickey Rourke and Kim Basinger.
Jan. 29: "The Draughtsman's Contract" (1983; Peter Greenaway), with Anthony Higgins, Janet Suzman, and Anne Louise Lambert; and "Wetherby" (1985; David Hare), with Vanessa Redgrave and Tim McInnerny.
Jan. 30-31: "A Face in the Crowd" (1957; Elia Kazan), with Andy Griffith, Patricia Neal, Walter Matthau, and Anthony Franciosa; and "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1951; Elia Kazan), with Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter, and Karl Malden.
From Feb. 1: "Dead Ringers" (1988; David Cronenberg), with Jeremy Irons and Geneviève Bujold; and "The Fly" (1986; David Cronenberg), with Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis, and John Getz.

Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Jan. 23: "The Life of Jimmy Dolan" (1933; Alfred E. Green), with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Loretta Young; and "The Little Giant" (1933; Roy Del Ruth), with Edward G. Robinson and Mary Astor.
Jan. 24: "One Night of Love" (1934; Victor Schertzinger), with Grace Moore; and "Pennies from Heaven" (1936; Norman Z. McLeod), with Bing Crosby and Madge Evans.
Jan. 25: "Black Legion" (1936; Archie Mayo), with Humphrey Bogart, Ann Sheridan, Erin O'Brien-Moore, and Dick Foran; "The St. Louis Kid" (1934; Ray Enright), with James Cagney; and "Star Witness" (1931; William Wellman), with Walter Huston.
Jan. 26: "Wild Boys of the Road" (1933; William Wellman), with Frankie Darro and Rochelle Hudson; and "Heroes for Sale" (1933; William Wellman), with Richard Barthelmess.
Jan. 27-30: "Sanshiro Sugata" (1943) and "Sanshiro Sugata, Part 2" (1945), both in Japanese, directed by Akira Kurosawa, with Susumu Fujita.
From Jan. 31: "No Regrets for Our Youth" (1946; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Susumu Fujita and Setsuko Hara; and "The Quiet Duel" (1949; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune.

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)
Jan. 23: "That Night in Rio" (1941; Irving Cummings), with Alice Faye, Don Ameche, and Carmen Miranda; and "Weekend in Havana" (1941; Walter Lang), with Alice Faye, John Payne, and Carmen Miranda.
Jan. 24: "Bob le Flambeur" (1955; Jean-Pierre Melville; in French), with Isabel Corey and Roger Duchesne; and "Doulos—The Finger Man" (1962; Jean-Pierre Melville; in French), with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Serge Reggiani.
Jan. 25: "Mr. Moto in Danger Island" (1939; Herbert I. Leeds), with Peter Lorre; "Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation" (1939; Norman Foster), with Peter Lorre; and "My Favorite Brunette" (1947; Elliott Nugent), with Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, and Peter Lorre.
Jan. 26: "Freaks" (1932; Tod Browning), with Olga Baclanova, Leila Hyams, and Wallace Ford; and "Nightmare Alley" (1947; Edmund Goulding), with Tyrone Power, Joan Blondell, and Coleen Gray.
Jan. 27-28: "Paris, Texas" (1984; Wim Wenders), with Harry Dean Stanton, Nastassja Kinski, and Dean Stockwell; and "Days of Heaven" (1978; Terrence Malick), with Richard Gere, Brooke Adams, Sam Shepard, Linda Manz, and Robert Wilke.
Jan. 29: "The Conformist" (1970; Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda; and "Mafioso" (1964; Alberto Lattuada; in Italian), with Alberto Sordi.
Jan. 30: "Rose of Washington Square" (1939; Gregory Ratoff), with Alice Faye, Tyrone Power, Al Jolson, and William Frawley; and "Lillian Russell" (1940; Irving Cummings), with Alice Faye, Henry Fonda, and Don Ameche.
Jan. 31: "Harriet Craig" (1950; Vincent Sherman), with Joan Crawford and Wendell Corey; and "Craig's Wife" (1936; Dorothy Arzner), with Rosalind Russell and John Boles.
Feb. 1: "The Mask of Dimitrios" (1944; Jean Negulesco), with Zachary Scott and Peter Lorre; and "Three Strangers" (1946; Jean Negulesco), with Geraldine Fitzgerald, Peter Lorre, and Sydney Greenstreet.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Jan. 23: "La Bête Humaine" (1938; Jean Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin; and "La Grande Illusion" (1937; Jean Renoir; in French), with Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, and Marcel Dalio.
Jan. 24: "Young and Innocent" ("The Girl Was Young"; 1937; Alfred Hitchcock),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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

with Derrick de Marney, Nova Pilbeam, Basil Radford, Percy Marmont, and Mary Clare; and "Murder" (1930; Alfred Hitchcock), with Herbert Marshall and Norah Baring.

Jan. 25: "A Guy Named Joe" (1943; Victor Fleming), with Spencer Tracy and Irene Dunne; and "The Seventh Cross" (1944; Fred Zinnemann), with Spencer Tracy, Signe Hasso, Hume Cronyn, and Jessica Tandy.

Jan. 26: "Sawdust and Tinsel" ("The Naked Night"; 1953; Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Harriet Andersson and Ake Groenberg; and "Monika" (1952; Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Harriet Andersson.

Jan. 27-28: "Walkabout" (1971; Nicolas Roeg); and "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975; Peter Weir), with Rachel Roberts and Dominic Guard.

Jan. 29: "Funny Face" (1957; Stanley Donen), with Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire, Kay Thompson, and Michel Auclair; and "Sabrina" (1954; Billy Wilder), with Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn, William Holden, and John Williams.

Jan. 30: "A Day in the Country" (1937; Jean Renoir; in French); and "La Marseillaise" (1938; Jean Renoir; in French), with Pierre Renoir and Louis Jouvet.

Jan. 31: "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1939; Sidney Lanfield), the first of the Basil Rathbone–Nigel Bruce Sherlock Holmes–Dr. Watson series; and "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" (1939; Alfred L. Werker), the second of the Rathbone-Bruce Holmes-Watson series.

Feb. 1: "Moby Dick" (1956; John Huston), with Gregory Peck, Richard Basehart, and Orson Welles; and "A Walk with Love and Death" (1969; John Huston), with Anjelica Huston and Assaf Dayan.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)

THEATRE 1: Jan. 23 at 2:30: "Death of a Cyclist" (1955; directed by Juan A. Bardem; in Spanish, with English subtitles), with Lucia Bose. . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 3 and 6: "Inheritance" (1987; Bill Donovan), a documentary.

THEATRE 2: Jan. 23 at 6:30: "She Must Be Seeing Things" (1987; Sheila McLaughlin), with Sheila Dabney and Lois Weaver. Miss McLaughlin will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 3 and 6: "Alice" (1987; Jan Švankmajer), an animated and live-action film, with Kristýna Kohoutová. . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 3: "Helsinki Napoli All Night Long" (1987; Mika Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 6: "Hamlet Goes Business" (1987; Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). Mr. Kaurismäki will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 3: "Calamari Union" (1984; Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 6: "Helsinki Napoli All Night Long." Mika Kaurismäki will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 1: "The Liar" (1980; Mika Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 2:30: "Crime and Punishment" (1983; Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 5:30: "Rosso" (1985; Mika Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 2:30: "The Worthless" (1982; Mika Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 5:30: "Shadows in Paradise" (1986; Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish, with English subtitles). . . . ¶ Jan. 30 at 3: "The Liar." . . . ¶ Jan. 30 at 6:30: A program of films by Lewis Klahr, who will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 3: "Rosso." . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 6: "Crime and Punishment."

American Museum of the Moving Image, 36th St. at 35th Ave., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)

RIKLIS THEATRE: A program of films by Cecil B. De Mille. Jan. 25 at 2:30: "The Woman God Forgot" (1917), with Geraldine Farrar and Wallace Reid. . . . Jan. 26 at 2:30: "The Whispering Chorus" (1918). . . . Jan. 27 at 2:30: "Old Wives for New" (1918), with Florence Vidor. . . . ¶ A program of films photographed by (or directed by) Néstor Almendros. Jan. 27 at 7:30 and Jan. 28 at noon: "Days of Heaven" (1978; Terrence Malick), with Richard Gere, Brooke Adams, Sam Shepard, Linda Manz, and Robert Wilke. . . . Jan. 28 at 5: "Nobody Listened" (1988; Almendros and Jorge Ulla), a documentary. . . . Jan. 28 at 7:30: "La Collectioneuse" (1966; Eric Rohmer; in French). . . . Jan. 29 at 1: "Sophie's Choice" (1982; Alan J. Pakula), with Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline, and Peter MacNicol. . . . Jan. 29 at 4:30: A lecture by Mr. Almendros on "Sophie's Choice." . . . Feb. 1 at 2:30: "La Collectioneuse."

WARNER COMMUNICATIONS SCREENING ROOM (Wednesdays through Sundays, continuous showings): A showing entitled "Video and Language: Video as Language."

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Films showing in either the **JONAS MEKAS THEATRE** or the **MAYA DEREN THEATRE:** Jan. 24 at 6: "Aerograd" (1935; Alexander Dovzhenko). . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 8: "Manhandled" (1924; Allan Dwan; a silent film). . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 9:30: "Committed" (1984; Sheila McLaughlin and Lynne Tillman). . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 6: "Prastankan" (1921; Carl Th. Dreyer; a silent film). . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 8: "Painters Painting" (1972; Emile de Antonio). . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 8:30: "Lives of Performers" (1972; Yvonne Rainer). . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 6: "Michael" (1924; Carl Th. Dreyer; a silent film). . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8:30: "Film About a Woman Who . . ." (1974; Yvonne Rainer). . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 7: "Heaven and Earth Magic" (Harry Smith). . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 10: "Kristina Talking Pictures" (1976; Yvonne Rainer). . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 6: "The Gold Rush" (1925; Charlie Chaplin; a silent film). . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: "Journeys from Berlin/1971" (1980; Yvonne Rainer). . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 7: "The Big Parade" (1925; King Vidor; a silent film). . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 9: "The Man Who Envied Women" (1985; Yvonne Rainer).

Collective for Living Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2111)—Jan. 23 at 8: "Queen of Blood" (1966; Curtis Harrington), with Basil Rathbone and Dennis Hopper. . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 8: "De Sade" (1969; Cy Enfield), with Keir Dullea and John Huston. . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 8: "Sorority Girl" (1957; Roger Corman), with Susan Cabot. . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8: "Mary Jane" (1968; Maury Dexter), with Fabian and Diane McBain. . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 8: Three films by Peter Thompson, who will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 10:30: A program of four short animated films by the Brothers Quay. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: "Written on the Wind" (1956; Douglas Sirk), with Robert Stack, Rock Hudson, Lauren Bacall, and Dorothy Malone. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 10:30: A program of four short animated films by the Brothers Quay. . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 8: A program of experimental films from the Soviet Union. . . . ¶ Jan. 30 at 8: "Landscape Suicide" (1986; James Benning). . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 8: Two works by James Benning. . . . ¶ Feb. 1 at 8: "Body and Soul" (1924; Oscar Micheaux; a silent film), with Paul Robeson.

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—Jan. 27 at 6:30: "Late Spring" (1949; Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese, with English subtitles), with Setsuko Hara. . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 2: "The Idiot" (1951; Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese, with English subtitles), with Setsuko Hara, Masayuki Mori, and Toshiro Mifune.

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"AIDS Media: Counter-Representations," a program consisting of four films and eighteen videotapes in five different segments. The schedule of performances is complicated; our best advice is to phone the museum for film and time schedules and ticket information. Closed Mondays.

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"Television's Greatest Jazz Programs"—Through Jan. 27: Excerpts from the show "Jazz Casual" (1963). . . . Starting Jan. 31: Two programs featuring Benny Goodman. Tuesdays at 2:30 and 5:30, and Wednesdays through Fridays at 2:30. . . . ¶ Through Jan. 28: A program of six films written by Gabriel García Márquez. . . . From Jan. 31: The first in a series of sixteen award-winning international television programs. The schedule of performances is complicated; our best advice is to phone the museum for titles, schedules, and ticket information. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (757-3100)—"Gone with the Wind" (1939; Victor Fleming), with Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard, and Olivia de Havilland. (Jan. 30 at 8 and Jan. 31 at 2 and 8.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—A series of films on Asia made by German filmmakers. Jan. 27 at 7: "The Laughing Star" (1983; Werner Schroeter), a documentary on the Marcos regime in the Philippines.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(Unsigned notes are by Pauline Kael; others are by Terrence Rafferty.)

The Accidental Tourist—It begins with the numb grief of a punctilious Baltimore travel writer, Macon Leary (William Hurt), whose twelve-year-old son was senselessly shot by a gunman in a Burger Bonanza. Macon has become such a depressed loner that his wife (Kathleen Turner) leaves him. The movie, directed by Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote the screenplay with Frank Galati, closely follows the 1985 Anne Tyler novel, and it's about Macon's coming to life. A fiercely eager oddball (Geena Davis) who pulls him into her bed turns out to be his salvation. The plot construction is that of a screwball comedy of the thirties: poor working girl has the life force that upper-class prig needs. But people talk a formal, affected English that sounds counterfeit and everyone seems catatonic—even the skinny oddball, whose tense talkativeness is as panicked as Macon's recessiveness and silence. But she symbolizes change, and this picture's ponderousness doesn't keep it from affecting some people deeply. It provides a new romantic myth of the eighties—a time of widespread remarriage and hoped-for rebirth. Essentially, this is a dating movie, like Claude Lelouch's "A Man and a Woman," but for darker times, for times of lower expectations. The film's minimal fun has to do with the wry, pixillated family humor of Macon and his siblings (Amy Wright, Ed Begley, Jr., and David Ogden Stiers). The cast includes Bill Pullman and Robert Gorman. Cinematography by John Bailey; the offensive rippling score is by John Williams. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/23/89.) (Cinema II, Art Greenwich Twin, 57th St. Playhouse, Loews 84th Street Six-plex, and West Side Cinema. . . . ¶ Murray Hill, and Cinema 3rd Avenue; through Jan. 26.)

Bagdad Café—After an argument with her husband on a godforsaken stretch of highway at the edge of the Mojave Desert, a fat German tourist named Jasmin (Marianne Sägebrecht) checks into a crummy motel attached to the equally crummy Bagdad Café. This movie, the first in English by the German director Percy Adlon (whose 1985 "Sugarbaby" was also a vehicle for Sägebrecht), is filled with eccentrics who are apparently meant to be lovable. The rather precious conceit of the film is that Jasmin somehow brings the outcast characters together in a kind of extended family; by the end, the Bagdad Café has been transformed into a popular roadside cabaret, with everyone contributing a specialty (Jasmin does magic tricks). The American performers are trapped in a movie that treats them as merely exotic—waxwork grotesques waiting to be animated by a mysterious German touch. Eleonore Adlon and Christopher Doherty collaborated with the director on the screenplay. With CCH Pounder, Jack Palance, and Christine Kaufmann.—T.R. (Quad Cinema; through Jan. 26.)

Beaches—This movie about the lifelong friendship between two women of contrasting back-grounds—Bette Midler as CC Bloom, a show-biz-crazy Jewish redhead from New York, and Barbara Hershey as Hillary Whitney, a repressed wealthy Wasp from San Francisco—suggests the kind of material that Midler might be using for a takeoff. Instead, it's being played for maudlin soulfulness. After a while, it turns into an all-girl "Love Story," with Hillary becoming ghoulishly pale from heart disease and CC (now a singing star) staying at her side. Through this (slow, slow) deathwatch, CC learns to transcend her self-involvement; she becomes a better person, and—implicitly—a bigger star. If you admired Midler in "The Rose" and "Down and Out in Beverly Hills," you may want to bash your head against the wall. With Mayim Bialik, who must have been specially created to be CC at eleven, and John Heard. The director, Garry Marshall, shows no feeling for the material—not even false feeling; the script, by Mary Agnes Donoghue, is from Iris Rainer Dart's novel. (1/23/89) (Gramercy, Cinema I, Guild, and Embassy.)

Dangerous Liaisons—One of the least static costume films ever made, and what costumes! The women—Glenn Close, Michelle Pfeiffer, Uma Thurman, Swoosie Kurtz, Mildred Natwick—look as if they'd been dressed by Gainsborough. (Actually, it was James Acheson, who also dressed "The Last Emperor.") Principally about the erotic power games played by the Marquise de Merteuil (Glenn Close) and the Vicomte de Valmont (John Malkovich), who were once lovers but are now allies and co-conspirators, this first-rate piece of work by the daring and agile director Stephen Frears is alive in a way that movies of classics rarely are. The paradisially beautiful Pfeiffer is wonderfully affecting as the pawn of the debauchers' final game. The screenwriter, Christopher Hampton, reworked his 1985 theatrical version of the 1782 novel by Choderlos de Laclos; cinematography by Philippe Rousselot. Filmed in France. (1/9/89) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 68th St. Playhouse, Festival, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels—Michael Caine and Steve Martin as con men on the Côte d'Azur, in a remake of the 1964 "Bedtime Story." Caine is the slick, discreet Continental who operates by plan and fleeces middle-aged rich American women; Martin is a happy-go-lucky American spaz in wrinkled baggy pants; he's an improviser, a vagabond who chases after the most attractive young women he spots, and shamelessly, in a loud, whiny voice, cadges meals and a few bucks off them. The movie is mildly pleasant; it has amusing moments and a sunny sheen. The director, Frank Oz, takes such a square approach, though, that the action doesn't absorb your full attention. (Couldn't the women at least have been smart and lusty?) Caine and Martin preen beautifully. At their best, they're like a vaudeville team zapping each other and doing a soft-shoe. But the script, by Dale Launer, who reworked the 1964 script, by Stanley Shapiro and Paul Henning, is such a lazy ripoff of the past that there's not much juice in the roles: we seem to be watching the last pressing of the grapes. With Glenne Headly, Barbara Harris, Dana Ivey, Anton Rodgers, and Ian McDiarmid. Cinematography by Michael Ballhaus. (1/23/89) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

The Dressmaker—The whole cast rises to the occasion—a chance to appear in John McGrath's fine adaptation of the 1973 Beryl Bainbridge novel (published here in 1974 as "The Secret Glass"). Joan Plowright as Nellie, the prudish unmarried dressmaker, and Billie Whitelaw as Margo, the widow with a roving eye who works in a munitions factory, are sisters. The setting is Liverpool in 1944, and the plot centers on what happens when sallow, skinny Rita (Jane Horrocks), the seventeen-year-old niece they have raised, falls in love with Wesley (Tim Ransom), a Yank from Mississippi. This good, inexpensive British movie is about morbid respectability, and the director, Jim O'Brien, makes it possible for the actors to create a maze of claustrophobic subtexts. It's doubtful if either Plowright or Whitelaw has ever before been this scarily effective onscreen; Whitelaw's sky-blue eyes stab you—she seems to have become the nakedest of performers. With Peter Postlethwaite, Pippa Hinchley, and Rosemary Martin. (12/12/88) (Paris.)

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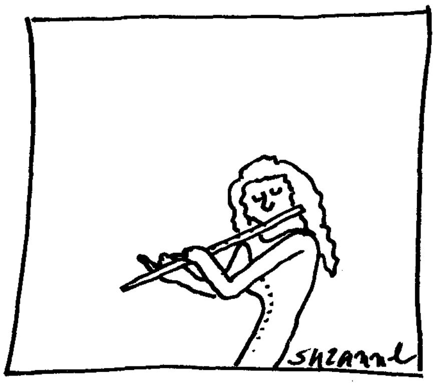
The Last Temptation of Christ—Martin Scorsese's film is based on an intense, rather ponderous novel by Nikos Kazantzakis that portrays Christ as a tormented prophet who has to choose between his human nature and his divine nature—who in order to fulfill his role as redeemer must reject the overpowering temptation to be merely a man. If we respond to anything in this movie it's to the idea of Scorsese wrestling with Kazantzakis's conception, thrashing manfully among the tangles of the novel's dense prose, trying to isolate some clear, intelligible meaning from this religious fever-dream. Scorsese hasn't managed to come up with a consistent visual style for the story, and the movie's intensity, over a span of two hours and forty minutes, is sputtering, fitful. The scenes meant to evoke the natural—the human—side of the story don't have much charge, and most of the actors look uncomfortable. (The drab modern idiom of Paul Schrader's dialogue is at least part of the problem.) This movie isn't a sacrilege; it's just an honorable mistake. With Willem Dafoe as Jesus, Harvey Keitel as Judas, Barbara Hershey as Mary Magdalene, and David Bowie as Pontius Pilate. Peter Gabriel composed the music.—T.R. (9/5/88) (Cinema 3.)

Law of Desire (1987)—One of the rare movies that's sensually exciting and at the same time funny. This flamboyantly glamorous homosexual fantasy by Madrid's gagster-artist Pedro Almodóvar is satirical, romantic, metaphorical; it has wonderful jokes and the exaggerated plot of an absurdist Hollywood melodrama. It doesn't disguise its narcissism; it turns it into bright-colored tragicomedy. Carmen Maura, a powerful actress in the manner of the early Anna Magnani, with the trippiness and self-mockery of Bette Midler, plays Tina, a transsexual who has a hot, roiling temperament. Tina's celebrity brother Pablo (Eusebio Poncela) directs classy homoerotic films. One night, Pablo takes home Antonio (Antonio Banderas), a government minister's son, who has been stalking him; by morning, Antonio loves him, is determined to possess him completely, and refuses to get out of his life. With Miguel Molina, Manuela Velasco, and the male transvestite Bibi Andersen as Tina's lesbian ex-lover. In Spanish. (4/20/87) (Quad Cinema.)

Madame Sousatzka—As a flamboyant, grande-dame piano teacher of Russian lineage, Shirley MacLaine seems to have entered the Simone Signoret sweepstakes, but she doesn't project Signoret's generosity—she doesn't spill over emotionally. This is, arguably, MacLaine's worst performance. She has flurries of physical mannerisms, but she's tight and held in; she's a wacky witch with frizzy red hair; she could be Norma Desmond's small-town spinster sister. Sousatzka lives in London (in an Edwardian house that is to be demolished) and devotes her energies and her hopes to the most prodigious of her students, a fifteen-year-old Indian boy raised in England—a role played with intelligence and poise by Navin Chowdhry. The blindingly derivative movie is about the boy's breaking free of her, though he knows he'll remain in her debt forever. Directed by John Schlesinger, this is a handsomely mounted production, and the musical community may regard it as a treasure—as the "Red Shoes" of the keyboard. With Peggy Ashcroft, Shabana Azmi, Geoffrey Bayldon, Leigh Lawson, and an appealingly understated performance by Twiggy. The script, by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Schlesinger, is based on the 1962 novel by Bernice Rubens. (10/31/88) (Metro Cinema; through Jan. 26.)



Matador—With Antonio Banderas, Assumpta Serna, and Nacho Martínez; directed by Pedro Almodóvar. In Spanish. (5/16/88) (Quad Cinema.)

Mississippi Burning—Set in Mississippi in the summer of 1964, it opens with a fictionalized re-creation of the murder of the three civil-rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—but it isn't really about the civil-rights movement. The director, Alan Parker, treats Southerners the way he treated the Turks ten years ago in "Midnight Express." And he twists facts here as he did there, with the same apparent objective: to come up with garish forms of violence. Two F.B.I. men (Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe) arrive to find out what happened to the three activists, and a huge manhunt is initiated. The movie hinges on the ploy that the F.B.I. men can't stop the K.K.K. from its terrorism against blacks until they swing over to vigilante tactics. And we're put in the position of applauding the F.B.I.'s dirtiest forms of intimidation. Hackman is superb, and there's impressive work by Frances McDormand, Brad Dourif, Park Overall, Stephen Tobolowsky, and others. But the film is morally repugnant. The script is credited to Chris Gerolmo (Parker says he rewrote it). (12/26/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Warner. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Jan. 26.)

The Naked Gun—An explosion of sixth-grade humor: terrible puns, broad slapstick, crushingly obvious sexual innuendo, a strategically detonated fart . . . The filmmakers (most of whom were also involved in "Airplane!") are low-comedy purists. The movie could be dopier only if it were longer: its stupidity has a relentlessness and a formal rigor that are practically French. (The scrupulous aesthetic consistency also extends to the cinematography and the editing, which are sixth-grade quality, too.) With Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla Presley, Ricardo Montalban, George Kennedy, O. J. Simpson, John Houseman, and Jeannette Charles as Queen Elizabeth. Written by David and Jerry Zucker, Jim Abrahams, and Pat Proft, and directed by David Zucker.—T.R. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gemini, Loews Orpheum, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Peking Opera Blues—This insanely high-spirited action comedy, by the Hong Kong director Tsui Hark, is more like a great game of pinball than like any other movie you've ever seen. It's all motion, color, and noise. Too much is always happening, and too rapidly: if your reflexes are a touch slow, you're out of luck. The plot, which pits stunning young revolutionaries against rotten old warlords and generals in 1913 Peking, is just a pretext for Hark's imaginative action choreography. When it comes to movement, this director has no conscience: martial-arts violence, slapstick, door-slamming farce, and the stylized gestures of Peking Opera are all pretty much the same to him, and the pop-culture cheekiness with which he mashes them all together is irresistible. The movie is exhausting, brazenly commercial, and mighty silly; it's also sweet-natured, unpredictable, and buoyant. It makes you feel as if you were about eleven years old. With Lin Ching Hsia, Sally Yeh, and Cherie Chung. In Cantonese.—T.R. (Film Forum 1; starting Jan. 25.)

Pelle the Conqueror—An aging, weak-willed

IN BRIEF–Cont'd

Swedish widower (Max von Sydow) and his young son (Pelle Hvenegaard) emigrate to Denmark and find work on a large estate, where they're exploited and abused. The boy, more spirited than his father, ultimately escapes. The movie, written and directed by Bille August from a novel by Martin Andersen Nexo, isn't as dreary as it sounds. August directs with great skill and feeling, and the cinematography, by Jorgen Persson ("Elvira Madigan"), is sensational. The images are never simply beautiful—they always carry a strong emotional and dramatic charge. Yet there's a basic dullness in Nexo's material which August can't transcend. For most of the picture's two-and-a-half-hour running time, we're moved and bored simultaneously. In Danish and Swedish.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza.)

Running on Empty—Naomi Foner's screenplay is about the problems of a fugitive family: Mom and Dad (Christine Lahti and Judd Hirsch) have been on the run since 1971, when, as student activists, they helped blow up a campus building, not knowing that there was a man inside. They keep moving all over the country with their two sons (River Phoenix and Jonas Abry), changing their names and taking menial jobs so that they won't draw attention to themselves. The crisis comes when their older son (Phoenix), a musical prodigy, is noticed by a sympathetic teacher and encouraged to audition for Juilliard. The director, Sidney Lumet, buries everything that's original about the story, and leaves his hardworking performers bogged down in the mess, spinning their wheels. There's not a moment that feels authentic; instead of attending to detail, Lumet pumps the story full of gross, Oscar-worthy sentimentality. With Martha Plimpton, whose fresh, lively readings and expressions as the older son's girlfriend give some spark to most of her scenes. —T.R. (9/19/88) (Gotham Cinema. No performances Jan. 30-31.)

Talk Radio—Eric Bogosian's portrait of Barry Champlain, the abusive host of a late-night radio call-in show, was conceived for the stage, where it functioned as both a star vehicle and an all-purpose big metaphor for Life in These United States. The movie version, directed and co-written by Oliver Stone, magnifies the flaws in the original material. Bogosian's hyperthyroid performance isn't improved by the introduction of psychological explanations for the character's bad behavior: Champlain, it seems, acts like a jerk because he doesn't know how to give or receive love. Oh. Bogosian can't even begin to make this convincing, either because he doesn't quite believe it himself, or because his acting style is geared to punching home sharp isolated effects rather than developing a character. (Disturbingly, he's at his best when he's spitting out put-down lines and hanging up on callers.) And the dark-night-of-the-American-soul metaphor, more than a little dubious in the first place, has been jacked up to an insane, hysterical pitch. Stone and Bogosian have moved the setting from Cleveland to Dallas (presumably more sinister), and have pilfered bits of the true story of Alan Berg, the Southwestern radio personality who was murdered by white supremacists in 1984. They turn Champlain into a martyr. There's no sense trying to make anything coherent out of any of this. The filmmakers' paranoia is aggressively random—purely opportunistic. The movie keeps screaming at us inarticulately, as if it had a terribly important message to get across; after a while, all we want to do is say something rude and take another call. Also with Ellen Greene, Alec Baldwin, Leslie Hope, John C. McGinley, and Michael Wincott. Music by Stewart Copeland.—T.R. (Beekman, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

Tequila Sunrise—You have to be able to enjoy trashy shamelessness to enjoy old Hollywood and to enjoy this picture. Robert Towne, who wrote and directed, is soaked in the perfume of thirties and forties Hollywood romanticism. This is a lusciously silly movie; it has an amorous shine. The three talented stars are smashing: Mel Gibson is a former drug dealer who longs for a decent, respectable life; Kurt Russell is his friend who's the head of the narcotics squad in L.A. County; and Michelle Pfeiffer is the woman they both love. The crime plot often seems to be stalled, and by rational standards the stars' triangular shuffle is flimsy and stupid, but by romantic standards the whole thing is delectable. With Raul Julia, who has a big, likable, rumbling presence as a scoundrel, J. T. Walsh as a quintessential flatfoot, and Ann Magnuson. The golden cinematography is by Conrad Hall. (12/26/88) (Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and 8th St. Playhouse; through Jan. 26.)

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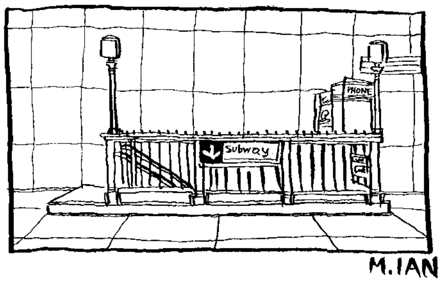
The Thin Blue Line—Errol Morris's trancelike, almost lyrical documentary tells the story of a 1976 cop-killing in Dallas and examines the process by which a man who is almost certainly innocent was convicted and sentenced to death for the crime. The movie's form is circular, spiralling, its obsessive, repetitive visual motifs echoed in Philip Glass's hauntingly monotonous score. In showing us the lies, the fears, the social pressures, the ulterior motives, the stubbornness, and the plain confusion that combined to produce the case against the unfortunate Randall Adams—whose fate is worthy of a Borges hero—Morris seems to be investigating not just this squalid murder but the very nature of untruth. His style is occasionally too fancy and elliptical for absolute clarity, but this is a powerful and thrillingly strange movie. Morris—who actually uncovered new evidence in the course of making the film—has turned Randall Adams' case into a kind of tabloid poetry, a meditation on uncertainty and the fascination of violence.—T.R. (9/5/88) (Quad Cinema; through Jan. 26.)

Torch Song Trilogy—Harvey Fierstein's adaptation of his much-honored play means to be funny and touching, but the mixture doesn't come out quite right. This chronicle of the life and loves of a New York drag queen named Arnold Beckoff (played by Fierstein) isn't a very rigorous dramatic construction: it alternates sitcom farce with tragedy, soap opera with cabaret, maudlin speechifying about self-respect with snappy one-liners. Unfortunately, the lighter element's don't play very well in this film version: watching this movie often feels like sitting in a room full of paintings of sad-eyed clowns. As Arnold's mother, Anne Bancroft does some of the grisliest overacting in memory. Also with Matthew Broderick, Brian Kerwin, Ken Page, and, in a small role, the famous female impersonator Charles Pierce. Directed by Paul Bogart. —T.R. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, and Carnegie Hall Cinema. . . . ¶ Eastside Cinema; through Jan. 26. . . . ¶ Metro Cinema; starting Jan. 27.)

Tucker: The Man and His Dream—There are marvellous moments throughout Francis Ford Coppola's biography of Preston Tucker (Jeff Bridges), a Midwestern inventor/entrepreneur who tried, and failed, to manufacture and market an innovative new automobile in the late forties. The style of "Tucker" is hyped-up forties Hollywood, and we believe, at first, that its intent is ironic, that Coppola is playing with America's optimistic, movie- and magazine-fuelled vision of itself in the postwar years. Bafflingly, this style doesn't change, or even modulate, when Tucker's bold enterprise starts to come apart, undermined by pressure from the government and the big three auto companies; the movie remains grandiose and artificial—all golden lighting and low, heroic angles. "Tucker" collapses in nostalgia, bad faith, and Capra-style populism. Also with Joan Allen, Martin Landau, Frederic Forrest, Mako, Lloyd Bridges (uncredited), and Dean Stockwell, who does a lovely, mysterious cameo as Howard Hughes, Screenplay by Arnold Schulman and David Seidler; cinematography by Vittorio Storaro.—T.R. (8/22/88) (Plaza; through Jan. 26.)



Twins—High Concept at its deadliest. A botched experiment in genetic engineering produces a wildly mismatched set of twins: Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito. They meet for the first time as adults in their thirties; high jinks ensue. It's actually worse than you'd expect. The screenplay is credited to four guys, and can't even claim one good joke per writer. And the direction, by Ivan Reitman, is so inert that you'd swear the movie was a sequel to something. Also with Chloe Webb, Kelly Preston, and, too briefly, Trey Wilson.—T.R. (Bay Cinema, Baronet, U. A. East and Olympia. . . . ¶ Art Greenwich Twin, and National Twin; through Jan. 26. . . . ¶ Movieland; starting Jan. 27.)

What Have I Done to Deserve This! (1984)—This film by Pedro Almodóvar has an Off Off Broadway informality. It's a generally likable dadaist farce about working-class family life in Madrid's housing projects—huge block buildings of dinky, cramped apartments. The heroine, Gloria (Carmen Maura), drags herself through eighteen-hour days with the help of No Doz and an occasional sniff of glue or detergent. She goes out to work as a cleaning woman and also cooks and scrubs for her taxi-driver husband (who's a gifted forger and is involved in a scheme to fake Hitler's memoirs) and her two sons—a fourteen-year-old drug dealer and a twelve-year-old hustler who seduces his schoolmates' fathers. You'll probably never see a woozier treatment of the breakdown of the family and the decay of society. In Spanish. (Quad Cinema; through Jan. 26.)

Wings of Desire ("Der Himmel über Berlin")—With Bruno Ganz, Otto Sander, and Solveig Dommartin; directed by Wim Wenders. In English, French, and German. (5/30/88) (Bleecker St. Cinema.)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. The artificial is what sends him sky high, and the Madrid of this film is (as the closing song has it) "Puro Teatro." This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her long-time live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. Cinematography by José Luis Alcaine. In Spanish. (11/14/88) (Cinema Studio.)

Working Girl—Mike Nichols made this yuppie Cinderella romance, with Melanie Griffith as Tess McGill, a poor but enterprising girl from Staten Island who fights off the sleazoid bosses and struggles to break through the educational-background barriers and climb from Wall Street secretary to executive. We're supposed to be cheered by watching Tess become part of the establishment. Griffith is very appealing, and she carries what there is of the picture, but this is the kind of star performance in which the heroine's misty eyes and soft-focus smiles (which suggest bleariness) are supposed to turn our brains to jelly. After a bouncy, promising opening, the staging becomes so broad you can't tell whether satire is intended or just dumb jokes. With Sigourney Weaver, Harrison Ford, Joan Cusack, and Alec Baldwin. The script is credited to Kevin Wade. (1/9/89) (34th St. East, Coronet, 86th Street East Twin, Waverly, 23rd St. West Triplex, Regency, and Criterion Center.)

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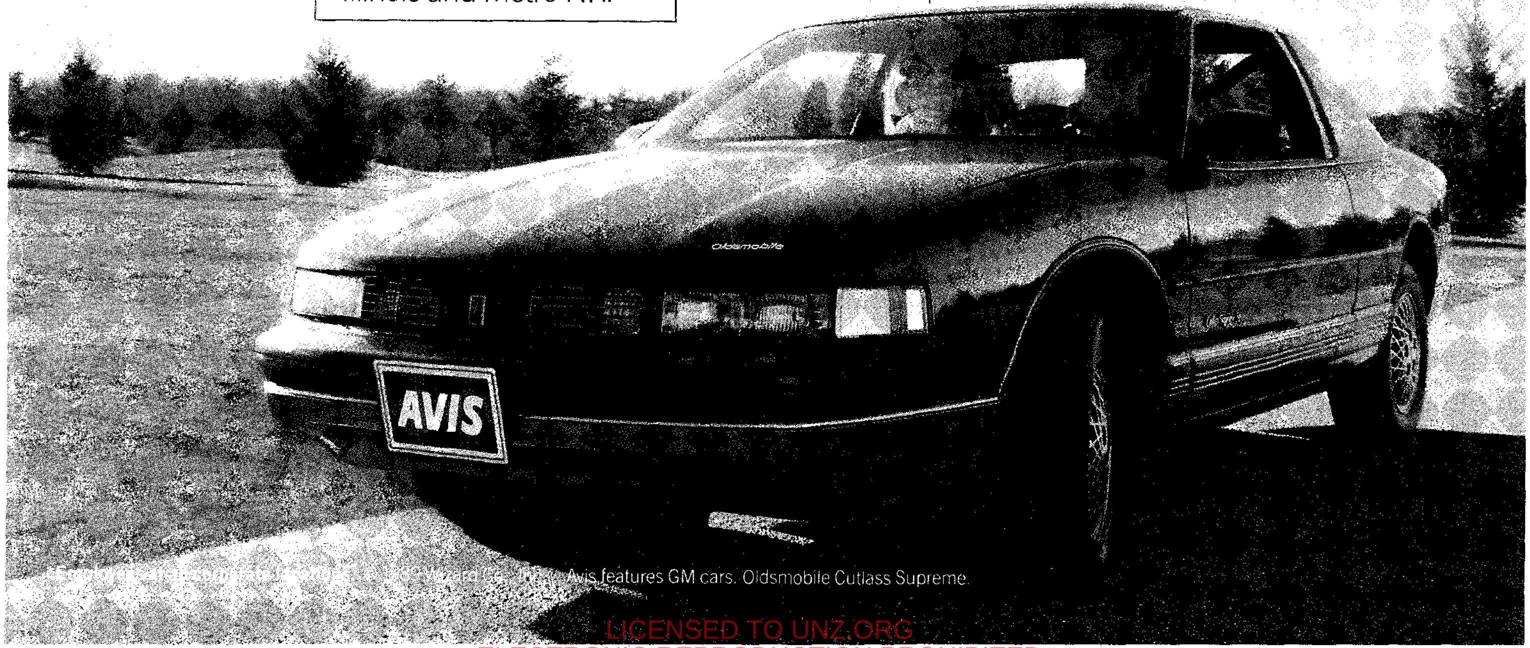

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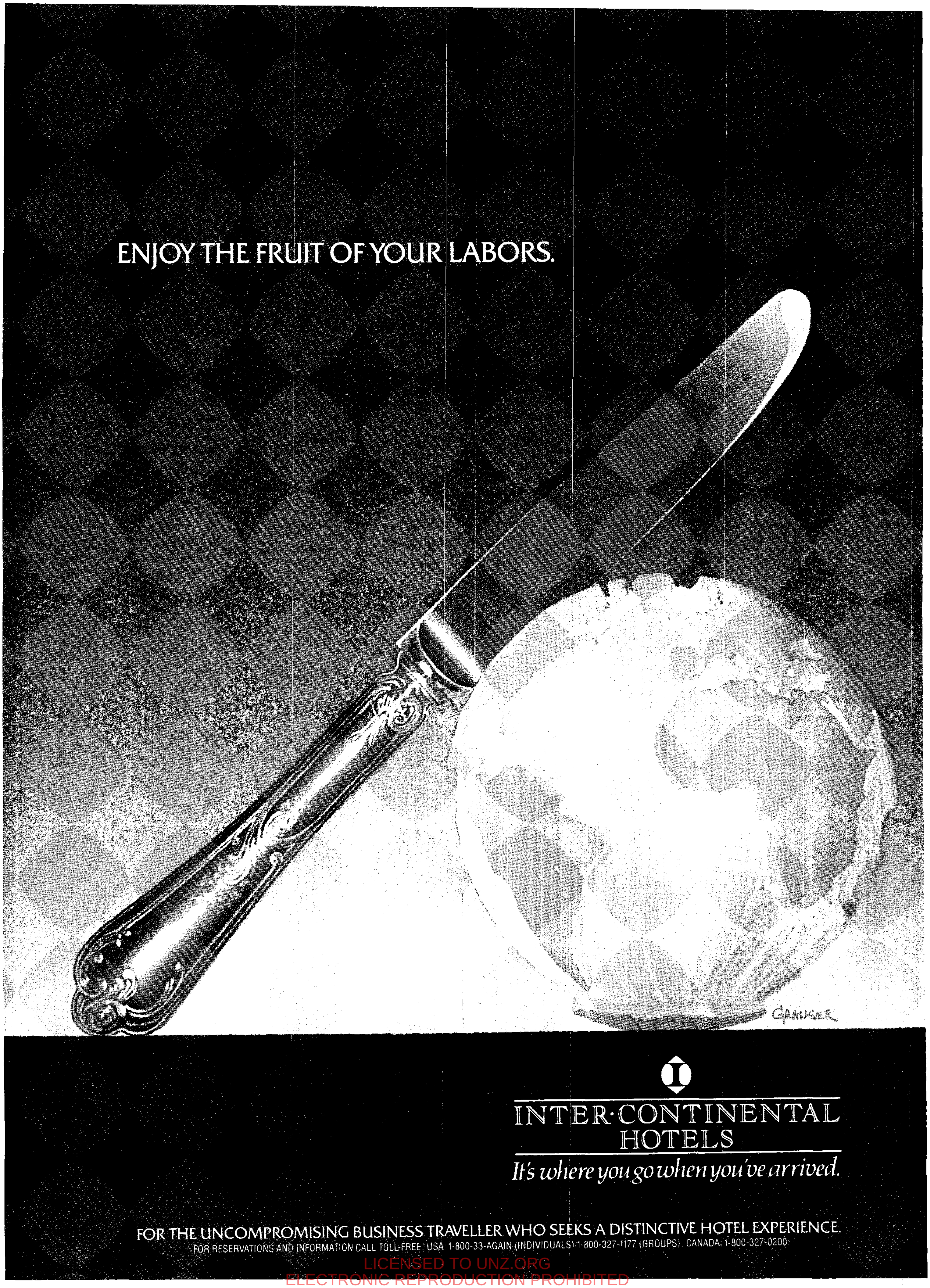

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

LAST weekend, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine honored the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr., who would have been sixty years old on January 15th. (No matter how many times we say to ourself or hear it said that Dr. King achieved everything he achieved before the age of forty, it astonishes us.) There was a gospel concert on Saturday night and a convocation on Sunday afternoon, and the unifying idea of each was the education and moral development of children—one of Dr. King's abiding concerns. "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education," he said. "The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason but with no morals." And there were children all over the place Saturday and Sunday, onstage and off, lending both events a measure of energy and hope, plus a few spontaneous, sometimes goofy moments. On Saturday night, while the Voices of Victory, a handsome, full-throated chorus from Queens wearing purple robes, sang a lively call-and-response number, a pickup group composed of members of the under-two set joined in from all corners of the church. They were back on Sunday, offering a counterpoint of complaint to some of the convocation's more garrulous speakers. And every now and then on Sunday the tiniest members of the St. Luke's A.M.E. Youth Choir—some of them couldn't have been more than four or five—departed from unanimity in their swaying.

Saturday night's concert raised money to establish a scholarship, named for Dr. King, that would enable needy children in the community to attend the Cathedral School. But more than money was raised at the concert—the *roof* was raised. After the lights went down, the Reverend Joel Gibson, subdean of the cathedral, said he wanted everyone to just let the evening happen: "That means standing up when you feel like standing up, shouting when you feel like shouting, and saying 'Amen' when you feel like saying 'Amen.' " We accepted this as implicit permission to take notes when we felt like taking notes: "Kecia Lewis, who was in 'The Gospel at Colonus' on Broadway, stretches out 'glory' in 'The Lord's Prayer' to at least ten syllables. At end, lets it billow out over audience like invisible blanket of warmth. Welcome inasmuch as temperature is about 40 in here. . . . Voices of Victory and the Inspirational Choir come two by two down the aisle, in purple-and-turquoise pairs. . . . In 'Amazing Grace,' Phoebe Snow waves her hand around like sign language. . . . Twinkie Clark, petite, elegant, gets crowd on its feet with 'You Brought the Sunshine.' "

In the middle of the program, the voice of Martin Luther King rang out in the cathedral: "I want you to be able to say that I *did* try to feed the hungry. I want you to be able to say that I *did* try to clothe those who were naked." More than a few felt like saying "Amen" to that.

Sunday's convocation turned out to be a long and miscellaneous tribute to Dr. King. There were speeches—by, among others, James Grant, the executive director of UNICEF; David Dinkins; and Cleveland Robinson, a union official and an old friend of Dr. King's—and songs and dancing, and the presentation of awards to Mother Clara Hale, the founder of Hale House, which takes in babies born drug-addicted, and to Father Bruce Ritter, the director of Covenant House, which helps runaway children and adolescents. The event took on life intermittently—for instance, when a youthful violin ensemble, the girls wearing

lovely pastel gowns, launched into a bravura performance of a number distantly related to "The Flight of the Bumble Bee," and when perfect strangers greeted each other with warm handshakes after singing "We Shall Overcome." As the afternoon wore on, though, the feeling grew on us that only the children's hearts were fully in what they were doing. Dispiritedness, a sense of flagging purpose, often seemed to be hanging in the cathedral's chilly air, and it was hard to believe completely that this was, as Rabbi Michael Gelber put it in the benediction, "a day of celebration, not regret, a day of hope, not of fear."

We realized that this pall had actually begun to descend on us after Saturday's concert, as we made our way out of the church and into the cold, wet night. It had a little to do with thinking about how bad things were in black and Hispanic neighborhoods so near the cathedral, how many drug deals were taking place in the streets during the rousing gospel numbers we had just heard, how many people would be sleeping out in the rain. But, we finally understood near the end of Rabbi Gelber's prayer, it had most to do with something that had happened *inside* the cathedral at the end of the concert. As the audience started to file out, another speech by Dr. King, about a personal crisis during the Montgomery bus boycott, was resounding through the church: "Something said to me, You can't call on Daddy now, he's up in Atlanta a hundred and seventy-five miles away. You can't even call on Mama now. You've got to call on that *something . . . your Daddy used to tell* you about, that power that can make a way out of no way." It was electrifying, and it stopped everyone in his tracks. Then we all turned around, as if to try to see the speaker whose voice was filling the vast space with such passion and authority and to pay him courteous attention. But, of course, no one was there.

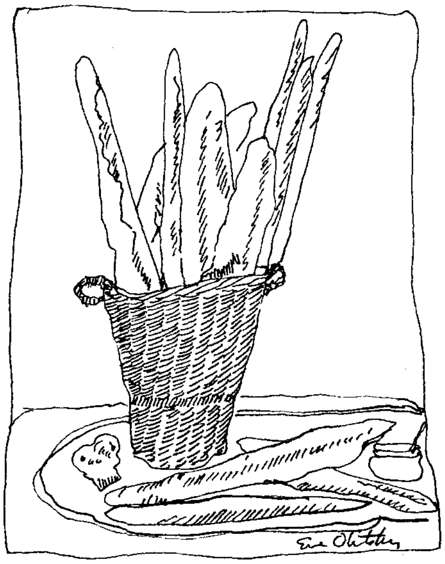
• •

Irradiation

A FEW years ago, some friends of ours went into the Russian Turkish Baths, on Tenth Street between First Avenue and Avenue A, and emerged with cheeks that looked fresh-scrubbed for about a week. We went this month to get a new skin for the Bush years.

The baths occupy a townhouse-size building diagonally across from a Pentecostal church. We saw as soon as we climbed the steps that this was one of those places that are *echt* New York and not quite America. A sign in the foyer instructed anyone who had special dietary requirements or a desire for a "platza"—a massage with oak-leaf brooms—to speak to Boris or Dave. Over our right shoulder as we picked up our locker key hung a sign in Cyrillic letters. The man who gave us our key and put our wallet in a strongbox was engaged in conversation in Yiddish with another patron. The menu on the kitchen counter offered chicken Georgian, borscht, sturgeon, and lox.

Behind the kitchen was an area of closely packed bunk beds. On the upper decks lay men in robes and trunks, dead to the world. We found our locker, along a wall. A few doors down, two men were discussing "The Lower Depths" as if it had premièred yesterday. We followed signs (in Roman letters) to the lower depths where the baths were: two of them—a Turkish room and a Russian room, which was labelled, rather disconcertingly, "Radiant Heat." There was also a tiny, greenish pool, a sauna, and several massage rooms. We tried the Turkish room first—a tiled steam bath with two wooden benches, six gray radiators along the walls, and a cold shower. The benches at first touch felt too hot to sit on. But standing up felt hotter. We sat. Someone opened the door and shouted *something*. "What did he say?" we asked a fellow-steamer. "He said we could make it hotter if we wanted to," the man answered. We noted this fact but did not act on it, and decided to try the sauna, across the hall.



This was, if anything, hotter. We had by this time worked out a rule of thumb. We would stay in one place until everyone had left who was there when we entered, so we'd strike newcomers as an old hand. Occasionally, we heard a phone ringing beyond the sauna door. How anyone could have an intelligent conversation there was beyond us.

Steamed and baked, we sank into a plastic chair at poolside. We had reached a state in which it takes an effort not to keel slowly over. If we dived into the pool, we were convinced, we would sink like a stone. We counted from one to a hundred, and noticed that the counting went much more slowly than we would have expected. It was time, we decided, for radiant heat.

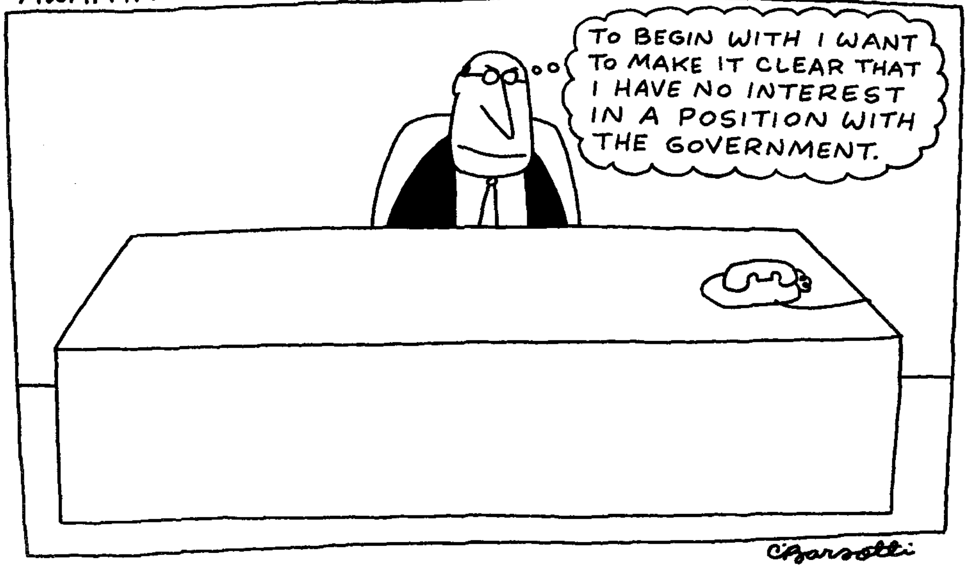
The Russian room had the most primitive quality—it had the feeling of an ur-bath. Did the hero with a thousand faces, we wondered, ever take a *shvitz*? The walls were of stone, as rough as an excavation. A man with long, curling earlocks lay on a wooden bench while two friends thrashed him with what looked like feather dusters—oak-leaf brooms. Other irradiated men sat on benches. From time to time, one would hoist a plastic bucket from under a cold-water tap and empty it over his head. The hairs in our nostrils felt as if they were burning.

We went back to the plastic chair and did another count to a hundred. Then we decided that since three hundred million Russians couldn't be wrong we would pour a bucket over ourself. It was like eating ice cream in Hell.

We finished with a massage, during which the masseur's radio was tuned to a program of music by the Strauss family, and then we drank a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice at the kitchen counter upstairs. We felt like a molted garter snake.

Scarves Everywhere

IF we were headed for a desert island and could take only one Hermès scarf with us, which would it be? This is the question we asked ourself


TO BEGIN WITH I WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN A POSITION WITH THE GOVERNMENT.
CBarsotti

AWAITING A CALL FROM THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

the other night as we made our way around "A Scarf Is Born," an exhibition of a hundred Hermès scarves from the past fifty years or so, on view at the Hermès Gallery, one flight above the store on East Fifty-seventh Street.

Earlier in the day, we had dropped by to say hello to Jean-Louis Dumas-Hermès, the chairman of the company and the great-great-grandson of Thierry Hermès, who founded the original store, in 1837. Ebullient, debonair, and charming, M. Dumas-Hermès is our idea of the quintessential Frenchman; if his life story were to be made into a movie, we would cast Louis Jourdan in the lead. On this particular morning, we found M. Dumas-Hermès just off the Concorde and in fine form, wearing a yellow V-neck cashmere pullover, charcoal-gray trousers, a pale-blue shirt, and an Hermès tie in shades of blue and gold. Standing at the center of the gallery like a traffic cop, he was directing the various people putting finishing touches on the exhibition. Two young women knelt on the floor, surrounded by boxes of scarves. A man on a ladder adjusted the track lighting over a table where two printers from the factory in Lyons would demonstrate the silk-screening process. A team of three stood rearranging photographs of the factory which were laid out on the carpet. At one end of the room, a drawing table had been set up for a photoengraver, and she showed us how she separates the artist's maquette into screens, one for each color—a process that takes an average of three hundred and fifty hours for a scarf with twenty-six colors. (A scarf called "Feu d'Artifice," with forty colors, holds the record.) There were scarves in square burled-walnut frames all along the walls, from the earliest, Jeu des Omnibus et des Dames Blanches, of 1937, which was based on a game popular in the eighteenth century, to one of the most recent—"1789," in honor of the bicentennial of the French Revolution.

"Every scarf here has a story," M. Dumas-Hermès told us, and he explained "Folies du Ciel," from 1983, depicting blimps, zeppelins, hot-air balloons, and a variety of unlikely-looking airborne vehicles that might have been designed by Rube Goldberg. "For this, our designer went to the Museum of the Army, at the Invalides, where they have on file these crazy proposals from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for different kinds of airships—impossible but very precise plans."

We stood with M. Dumas-Hermès and watched a fast-paced slide show, in which young women were seen wearing Hermès scarves in a number of ingenious ways: as a headdress under a beret, as the band on a hat, as a shawl, as a sash with bluejeans, as a pleated, fan-shaped bow at the neck. The models, he told us, were all amateurs—family and friends—and they had devised these variations themselves. As several slides showed the name Hermès written on a dozen scarves in as many different ways, M. Dumas-Hermès leaned in our direction and said, "We have a principle at Hermès—we never print our name two times the same way. On each scarf, it is designed by the artist. I take this as a big homage to my father, because he was always insisting on this—that the signature must be part of the design."

When the slide presentation ended, M. Dumas-Hermès took us on a quick tour of the exhibition, filling us in on some of his favorite scarves. "Just one more!" he called out to Chrysler Fisher, the president of Hermès in America, who was waiting to take him to lunch. "Now, this one is to commemorate the most extraordinary victory of the French. Let's face it, the French Navy has had many defeats—Trafalgar, and so on—although, as you know, we write our history so that we don't think too much about them. But in 1795, in the middle of the French revolutionary wars, the Dutch fleet was stuck in the ice off the Netherlands. And in the French Army there was this general called Pichegru who was very active—like Patton. He came along and took the fleet. It was the first time that the cavalry took a navy."

We returned to the exhibition that evening to find the photographs mounted on the walls, the gallery filled with people drinking champagne, and scarves everywhere—hanging like banners from the ceiling, draped over stools, unfurled like mere napkins over silver trays on which the hot hors d'oeuvres were being passed.

"This is absolutely a work of art," we heard one woman say to her companion as they stood staring at "Faune et Flore du Texas," which has a big turkey in the middle.

Pascale Mussard, a stylish young Frenchwoman who works for Hermès in Paris, was wearing an Hermès red double-breasted coat-dress with an Hermès scarf at the throat. She told us what a hard time she'd had choosing the scarves on display from the archives in Lyons. When she found that the archives were missing one of her favorites, with an exotic bird surrounded by a garland of fruit and flowers, she took her own scarf out of the drawer, and now it was hanging in the show.

Diane Pernet, a fashion designer who makes sleek clothes with a downtown twist, said that she loves Hermès—particularly some pillows she saw in the store's windows as she was on her way to the exhibition. We told her something we had learned that morning—that the factory has a repertoire of sixty-five thousand colors, soon to be increased to two hundred and twenty thousand. "Now, *that*," she said, "is a sensitivity to color."

We spotted M. Dumas-Hermès, standing alone for an instant, and seized the opportunity to ask him about another scarf, titled "À la Gloire de la Cuisine Française."

"Ah," he said, with a sigh, and he told us that it is a scarf for which he has "a soft corner" in his heart. In 1943, his father, Robert Dumas, who was then the chairman of the store, escaped from a German prisoner-of-war camp and joined his family in Cannes, where they remained until the war was over. While they were there, Robert Dumas himself designed this scarf, which depicts chefs in their white toques surrounded by French delicacies. "What is this?" Jean-Louis Dumas-Hermès, then five years old and accustomed to a steady diet of wartime rations, asked his older sister, pointing to the lavish topping on a cake. It was cream, she told him, and he asked, "What is cream?"

M. Dumas-Hermès told us that among the many honors he has received on the store's behalf he was particularly pleased by an invitation to a ceremony at the French Embassy in Moscow for the cosmonauts who recently returned from a year in space. Jean-Loup Chrétien, a Frenchman, had joined them for a month at the end of their stint, and had taken along an Hermès scarf, which was then stamped with the seal of the Soviet space station Mir. M. Dumas-Hermès grinned with evident pride. That was, he said, "the highest scarf in the world."

Pick Men

WE got the lowdown on guitar-pick collecting the other night when we ran into Chuck Collum and Rickey Anderson—who are best pals—during sound checks at the Savannah Civic Center three hours before a Merle Haggard/Randy Travis concert was to begin. A dozen people were standing near the stage door, most of them middle-aged, and several were holding little instant-focus cameras or pieces of paper. Chuck and Rickey weren't interested in autographs or in taking each other's picture in front of one of Randy's buses. They were easily the youngest people in the crowd (Chuck is nineteen, and Rickey is twenty), and their hair was the longest (Chuck's is blond and straight and shoulder length, and Rickey's is brown, dry-spiked, and shoulder length), and each was holding a thick three-ring binder. Chuck's binder was black, and Rickey's was snakeskin. ("It's not real snakeskin," he said. "It's only plastic. But it's a snakeskin *pattern*.") The binders were filled with pocketed sheets of clear plastic, the kind that coin collectors use, and almost every pocket held a guitar pick. Some of the picks had a band's name printed on them, and some had the name of a particular band member, and some had both.

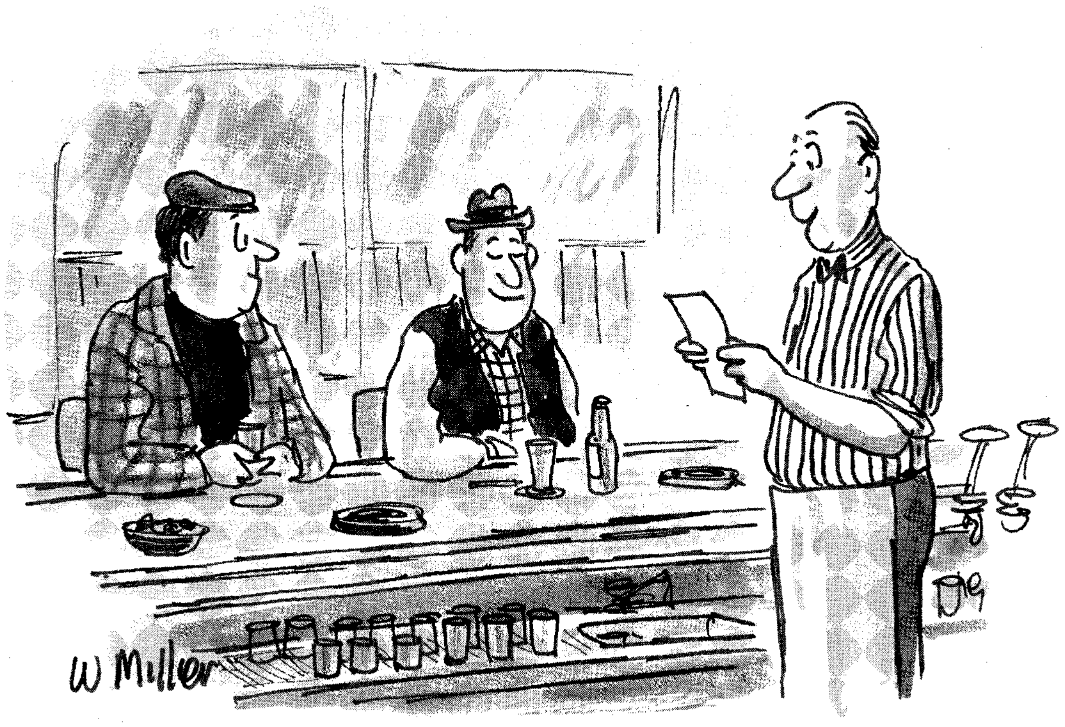
CHUCK: I've got two hundred and seventy picks.

RICKEY: I've got two hundred and sixty-one.

CHUCK: I would say we're *serious* collectors. Now, anyone who has sat in the front at a concert has picked up a few picks, because bands, especially metal bands, are always throwing theirs out to the crowd. That's not collecting. There *is* a type of collector—like my roommate, Brian Coleman—who is interested only in picks he catches from a band. He will not sell or trade or buy, and that's all he wants to hear about it. He has ten picks or so. That's how I was when I met Rickey, at a Mötley Crüe concert in—

RICKEY: November, '87. I was trying to get some picks from the band, and Chuck asked to see what I had.

CHUCK: There are not that many collectors around. We estimate there are about two per state. We meet up with other collectors sometimes, and we trade picks in the mail with a guy in Daytona and a guy in Orlando and a guy in Charlotte, but it's not like there is an organization or a magazine, or anything. Matter of fact, I hope it doesn't get that way, because then there'll be competition and picks will be harder to collect.



"This is astounding, Al. You never struck me as a haiku kind of guy."

RICKEY: There's a guy in Dallas who supposedly has four or five hundred picks.

CHUCK: But he's a record-club executive, so he gets 'em from the bands and people who come through his office. If you combined Rickey's and my collection, we'd have a chance of being in the top ten nationally.

RICKEY: *Definitely* in the top ten.

CHUCK: Sound checks are a good time to get picks, either from the band or from the techs. Techs are usually awake and running around by one in the afternoon.

RICKEY: To get *some* picks we have to travel—D.C., Atlanta. Once, we even went to Miami—for the Monsters of Rock concert.

CHUCK: Sometimes we go to the hotel or motel where the band is staying. Look for the buses and wait in the lobby. If you go to the auditorium itself—around back, usually—it's really important to get there before security. That's true even in Savannah, but the security here know us. And *forget* Jacksonville. They have an eight-foot-high brick wall behind the Coliseum and only one gate, and the buses park maybe seventy yards inside that.

RICKEY: We get to know the techs, too.

CHUCK: It's important to show the techs your collection. You can't just stand out there asking for a pick. Lots of people, all *kinds* of people, are asking those guys for stuff. But if you show them what you already have . . .

RICKEY: A collection attracts attention.

CHUCK: We've got about twenty Kiss picks each, from the Crazy Nights Tour and the Dynasty Tour and the Lick It Up Tour. We have about twenty-five Poison picks. That's because two of their guitar techs, Studs and Dallas, know us now and are really cool to us.

RICKEY: Steve Vai, David Lee Roth's lead guitarist? He saw my picks and said, "That's the greatest pick collection I've ever seen."

CHUCK: We've been to maybe a hundred-something concerts in the last year. Mostly metal and hard rock—you know, Metallica, Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden, Megadeth, Celtic Frost, Slayer. A lot of people think they are all about the Devil. They aren't. Well, Slayer, maybe. Me, as a person, I'm extra willing to go to any type of music that's played—even country, though I don't like country's pace. A pick is a pick. Randy Travis is famous, and I can use his picks to trade. Oh, I will *not* go to a George Michael concert. You could not *pay* me.

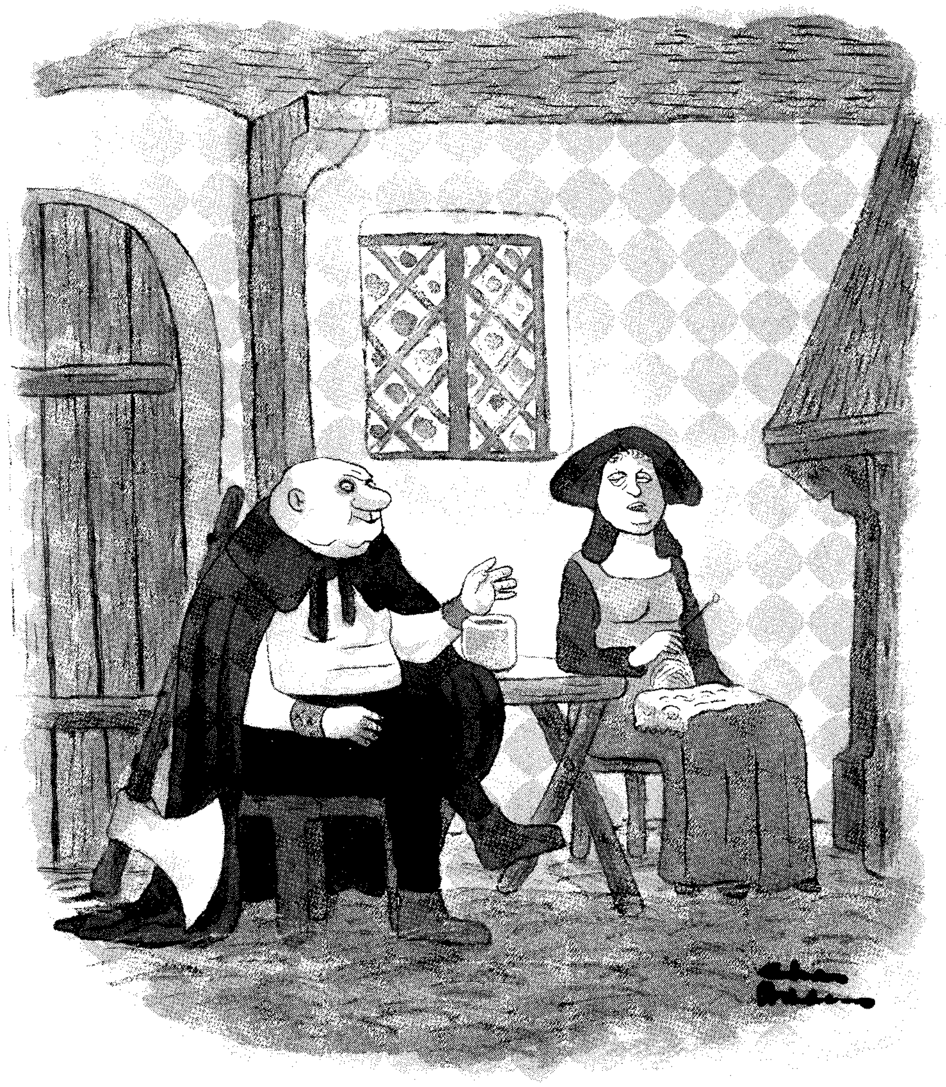
RICKEY: For example, you know the band Britny Fox? It's an up-and-coming metal band. Their sound tech, Ace, gave me *forty* picks. That's because I traded Ace a bunch of my doubles, so he could give them to his son.

CHUCK: I suppose you could call picks an investment. Our collections are worth probably four to five thousand dollars each.

RICKEY: Easy.

CHUCK: But we're in it for the fun of it. Of having Mötley Crüe's pick when no one else does. I'm studying photography at Savannah College of Art and Design and specializing in sports and concert photography, so I'll be going to concerts for a long time. I'll keep collecting non-stop, probably forever. I've kept my interest up two years, and I see more interest in the future.

RICKEY: I work in a sandwich shop now, but one day I want to work with a band. I keep asking techs if they need help. They always say there's so much travelling, but I'm travelling a lot now. I *like* travelling. I know it's hard work out there. I'm a real good worker—the boss says so. One thing was so cool. Rikki Rocket? The drummer for Poison? He helped me get some picks, and I thanked him and showed him my collection and said, "See you later, Rikki." You know what he said back? "See you later, Pick Man." Pick Man. All right!



"Please, let's not talk about your day."

• •

THE FOUL BALL

I AM doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice—not because of his voice, or because he was the smallest person I ever knew, or even because he was the instrument of my mother's death, but because he is the reason I believe in God; I am a Christian because of Owen Meany. I'm not very sophisticated in my knowledge of the Old Testament, and I have not read the New Testament since my Sunday-school days, except for those passages that I hear read aloud to me when I go to church. I'm somewhat more familiar with the passages from the Bible that appear in the Book of Common Prayer; I read my prayer book often, and my Bible only on holy days—the prayer book is so much more orderly.

I've always been a pretty regular churchgoer. I used to be a Congregationalist—I was baptized in the Congregational Church, and after some years of fraternity with Episcopalians (I was confirmed in the Episcopal Church, too) I became rather vague in my religion: in my teens I attended a "nondenominational" church. Then I became an Anglican; the Anglican Church of Canada has been my church ever since I left the United States, about twenty years ago. Being an Anglican is a lot like being an Episcopalian—so much so that being an Anglican occasionally impresses upon me the suspicion that I have simply become an Episcopalian again. Anyway, I left the Congregationalists and the Episcopalians—and my country—once and for all.

When I die, I shall attempt to be buried in New Hampshire—alongside my mother—but the Anglican Church will perform the necessary service *before* my body suffers the indignity of trying to be sneaked through United States customs. My selections from the Order for the Burial of the Dead are entirely conventional and can be found, in the order that I shall have them read—*not* sung—in the Book of Common Prayer. It will be a by-the-book Anglican service, the kind that would make my former fellow-Congregationalists fidget in their pews. I am an Anglican now, and I shall die an Anglican. But I skip a Sunday service now and then; I make no claims to be especially pious; I have a church-rummage faith—the kind that needs patching up every weekend. What faith I have I owe to Owen Meany, a boy I grew up with. It is Owen who made me a believer.

IN Sunday school, we developed a form of entertainment based on abusing Owen Meany, who was *so* small that not only did his feet not touch the floor when he sat in his chair—his knees did not extend to the edge of his seat; therefore, his legs stuck out straight, like the legs of a doll. It was as if Owen Meany had been born without realistic joints.

Owen was so tiny we loved to pick him up; in truth, we couldn't resist picking him up. We thought it was a miracle: how little he weighed. This was also incongruous, because Owen came from a family in the granite business. The Meany Granite Quarry was a big place, the equipment for blasting and cutting the granite slabs was heavy and dangerous-looking; granite itself is such a rough, substantial rock. But the only aura of the granite quarry which clung to Owen was the granular dust, the gray powder that sprang off his clothes whenever we lifted him up. He was the color of a gravestone; light was both absorbed and reflected by his skin, as with a pearl, so that he appeared translucent at times—especially at his temples, where his blue veins showed through his skin (as though, in addition to his extraordinary size, there was other evidence that he was born too soon).

His vocal cords had not developed fully, or else his voice had been injured by the rock dust of his family's business. Maybe he had larynx damage, or a destroyed trachea; maybe he'd been hit in the throat by a chunk of granite. To be heard at all, Owen had to shout through his nose.

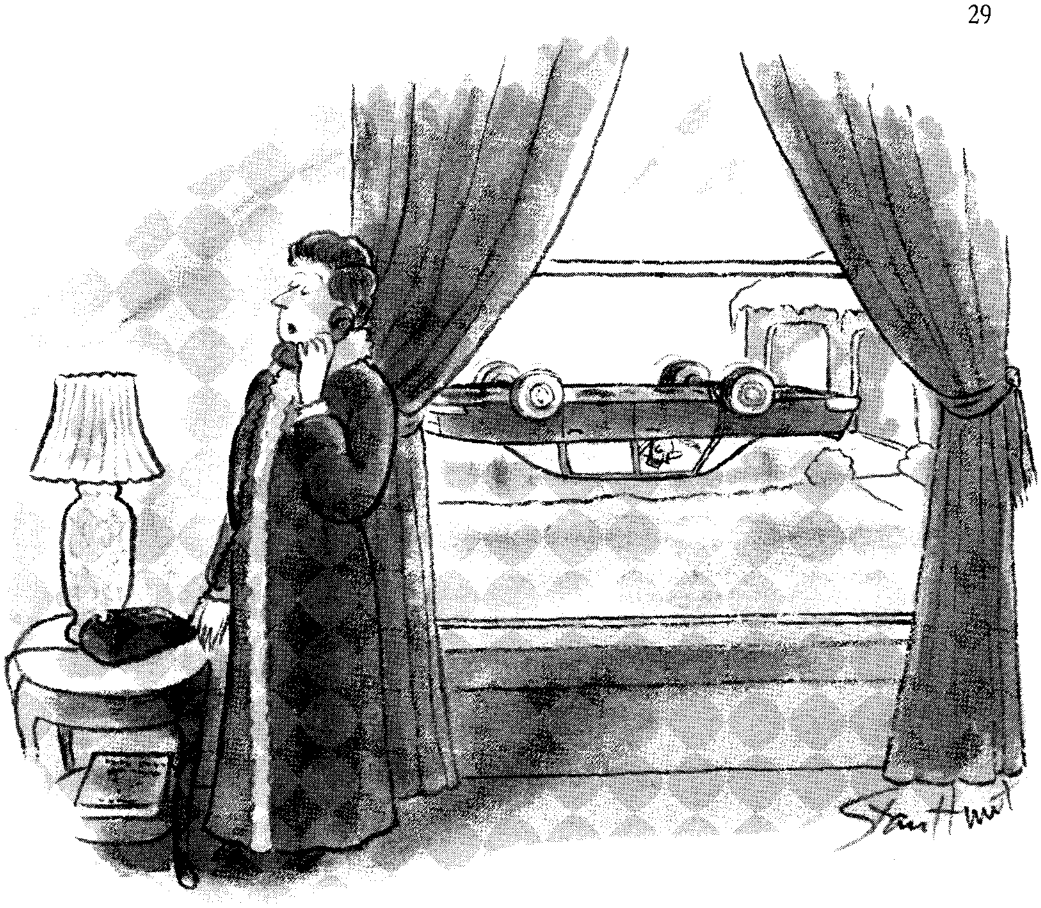
Yet he was dear to us—"a little doll," the girls called him, while he squirmed to get away from them; and from all of us.

I don't remember how our game of lifting Owen began.

This was Christ Church, the Episcopal Church of Gravesend, New Hampshire. Our Sunday-school teacher was a strained, unhappy-looking woman named Mrs. Walker. We thought this name suited her because her method of teaching involved a lot of walking out of class. Mrs. Walker would read us an instructive passage from the Bible. She

THEY CALL HIM MR. HERRINGBONE

would then ask us to think seriously about what we had heard—"Silently and seriously, that's how I want you to think!" she would say. "I'm going to leave you alone with your thoughts now," she would tell us ominously—as if our thoughts were capable of driving us over the edge. "I want you to think *very* hard," Mrs. Walker would say. Then she'd walk out on us. I think she was a smoker, and she couldn't allow herself to smoke in front of us. "When I come back," she'd say, "we'll talk about it."



"*Mrs. Carmody speaking, Miss Peters. Owing to severe ice conditions, Mr. Carmody may be a little late getting in this morning.*"

• •

By the time she came back, of course, we'd forgotten everything about whatever *it* was—because as soon as she left the room, we would fool around with a frenzy. Because being alone with our thoughts was no fun, we would pick up Owen Meany and pass him back and forth overhead. We managed this while remaining seated in our chairs—that was the challenge of the game. Someone—I forget who started it—would get up, seize Owen, sit back down with him, pass him to the next person, who would pass him on, and so forth. The girls were included in this game; some of the girls were the most enthusiastic about it. Everyone could lift up Owen. We were very careful; we never dropped him. His shirt might become a little rumpled. His necktie was so long, Owen tucked it into his trousers—or else it would have hung to his knees—and his necktie often came untucked; sometimes his change would fall out (in our faces). We always gave him his money back.

If he had his baseball cards with him, they, too, would fall out of his pockets. This made him cross because the cards were alphabetized, or ordered under another system—all the infielders together, maybe. We didn't know what the system was, but obviously Owen had a system, because when Mrs. Walker came back to the room—when Owen returned to his chair and we passed his nickels and dimes and his baseball cards back to him—he would sit shuffling through the cards with a grim, silent fury.

He was not a good baseball player, but he did have a very small strike zone and as a consequence he was often used as a pinch-hitter—not because he ever hit the ball with any authority (in fact, he was instructed never to swing at the ball) but because he could be relied upon to earn a walk, a base on balls. In Little League games he resented this exploitation and once refused to come to bat unless he was allowed to swing at the pitches. But there was no bat small enough for him to swing that didn't hurl his tiny body after it—that didn't thump him on the back and knock him out of the batter's box and flat upon the ground. So, after the humiliation of swinging at a few pitches, and missing them, and whacking himself off his feet, Owen Meany selected that *other* humiliation of standing motionless and crouched at home plate while the pitcher aimed the ball at Owen's strike zone—and missed it, almost every time.

Yet Owen loved his baseball cards—and, for some reason, he clearly loved the game of baseball itself, although the game was cruel to him. Opposing pitchers would threaten him. They'd tell him that if he didn't swing at their pitches they'd hit him with the ball. "Your head's bigger than your strike zone, pal," one pitcher told him. So Owen Meany made his way to first base after being struck by pitches, too.

Once on base, he was a star. No one could run the bases like Owen. If our team could stay at bat long enough, Owen Meany could steal home. He was sometimes used as a pinch-runner in the late innings; pinch-runner or pinch-hitter Meany—pinch-*walker* Meany, we called him. In the field, he was hopeless. He was afraid of the ball; he shut his eyes when it came anywhere near him. And if by some miracle he managed to catch it, he couldn't throw it; his hand was too small to get a good grip. But he was no ordinary complainer; if he was self-pitying, his voice was so original in its expression of complaint

HEADS

(Jerusalem, November 1987)

As if layered in a wedge of honey cake,
The aromas of split persimmon,
Mint, cat spray, and cardamom
All mingle with the bitter coffee
On this morning's scuffed brass tray
Brought into the shop by a cripple with wings.

The match for two Marlboros also now strikes
The end to one loud bit of holy
("Faith" in Arabic is "*din*")
Bargaining at the end of the street.
Peels of old light lie scattered
Outside. Dogs barking. Market day in the souk.

Muhammad deals in goat heads. His rival's shop
Is beef, swags of lung and counters heaped
With livers like paving stones,
A child-high pile of squat, outsize shins
And marbleized, harelipped hearts—
Food the rich man eats to settle his conscience.

And there are flies next door, and a hose to wash
Dung out of the cow guts . . . which reminds
Muhammad of his brother
Who left to become headwaiter at
Rasputin's Piano-Bar.
Both his grandfathers, his father too, had worked

In this tiled hollow lit by one bare bulb.
Stuck in the mirror are their postcards
Of the Kaaba, the silk-veiled,
Quartz-veined sky-stone, Islam's one closed eye.
Muhammad hasn't made his
Required pilgrimage. He went west instead,

The hajj to California, but came up six
Credits shy at Fresno State. (Shy too
Of the girlfriend who'd wanted
To marry "for good," not a green card.)
So he's back in the shop now,
Next to a copper tub of boiling water.

He takes another head by the ear and dips
It—*eight*, *nine*, *ten*—into the kettle,
Then quickly starts to shave it
With a bone-handled wartime Gillette.
The black matted shag falls in
Patches to the floor and floats toward the clogged drain.

One after another, the heads are stacked up
Behind, like odd-lot, disassembled
Plastic replicas of goats.
Though their lips are hardened now, the teeth
Of some can be seen—perfect!
But Muhammad hacks the jaws off anyway,

And the skulls with their nubbly horns and ears.
What's left is meant for his faithful poor,
For their daily meagre stew.
He lines up six on a shelf out front.
(As if all turned inside out,
The heads, no longer heads exactly, strangely

Bring to mind relief maps of the "occupied
Territories." Born on the wrong side
Of a new border, he's made
To carry his alien's I.D.,
Its sullen head shot labelled
In the two warring tongues.) Goat heads feed them all,

The refugee, the single man, and his dog—
Their delicacy. Cartilage knobs.
Fat sacs. The small cache of flesh.
The eyeballs staring out at nothing
In all directions. The tongue
Lolling up, as if with something more to say.

—J. D. McClatchy

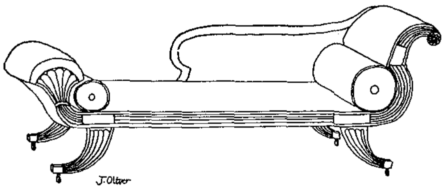
• •

that he managed to make whining lovable.

In Sunday school, when we held Owen up in the air—especially in the air!—he protested uniquely. We tortured him, I think, in order to hear his voice. I used to think his voice came from another planet. Now I'm convinced it was a voice not entirely of this world.

"PUT ME DOWN!" he would say in a strangled, emphatic falsetto. "CUT IT OUT! I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS ANYMORE. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. PUT ME DOWN! YOU ASSHOLES!"

But we just passed him around and around. He grew more fatalistic about it each time. His body was rigid; he wouldn't struggle. Once we had him in the air, he folded his arms defiantly on his chest; he scowled at the ceiling. Sometimes Owen grabbed hold of his chair the instant Mrs. Walker left the room; he'd cling like a bird to a swing in its cage, but he was easy to dislodge, because he was ticklish. A girl named Sukey Swift was especially deft at tickling Owen; instantly, his arms and legs would stick straight out and we'd have him up in the air again.



"NO TICKLING!" he'd say, but the rules to this game were *our* rules. We never listened to Owen.

Inevitably, Mrs. Walker would return to the room when Owen was in the air. Given the Biblical nature of her instructions to us "to think *very* hard," she might have imagined that by a supreme act of our combined and hardest thoughts we had succeeded in levitating Owen Meany. She might have had the wit to suspect that Owen was reaching toward heaven as a direct result of leaving us alone with our thoughts. But Mrs. Walker's response was always the same—brutish and unimaginative and incredibly dense.

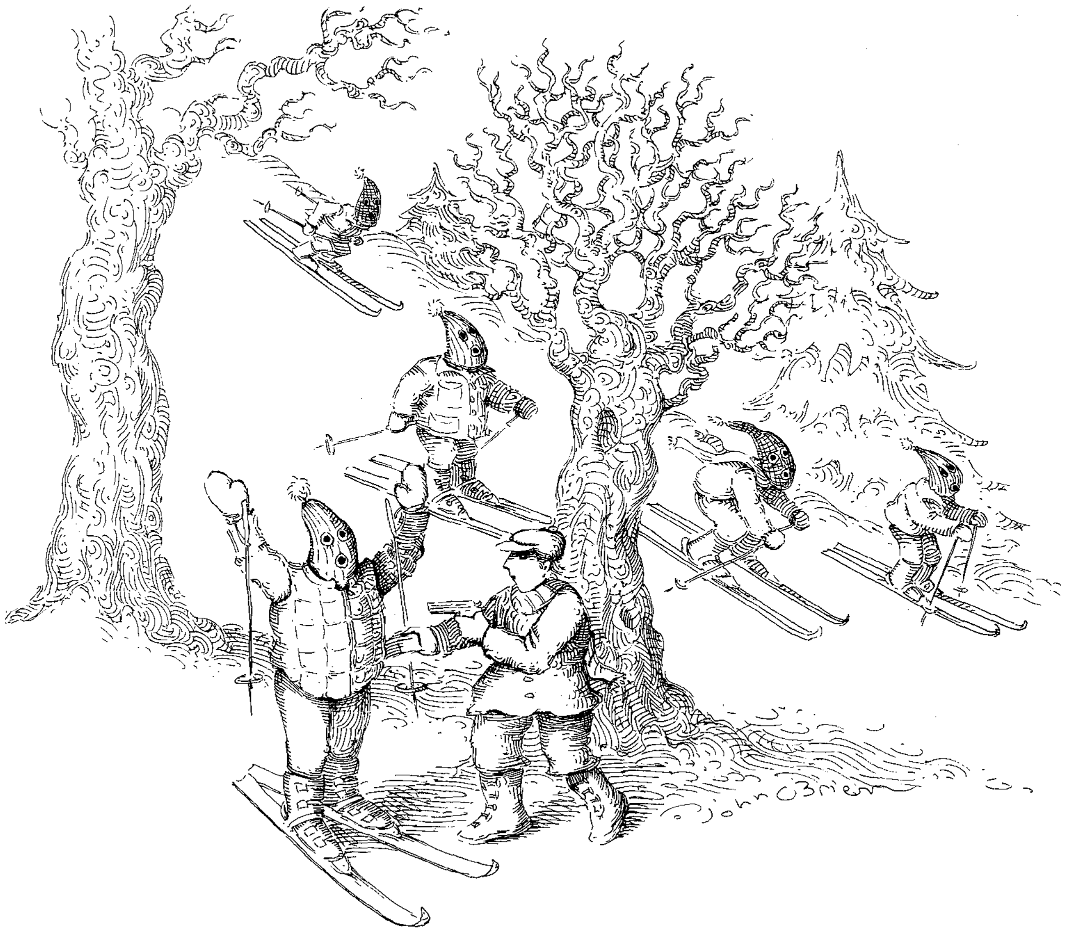
"Owen!" she would snap. "Owen Meany, you get back to your seat! You get *down* from up there!"

What could Mrs. Walker teach us about the Bible if she was stupid enough to think that Owen Meany had put himself up in the air?

Owen was always dignified about it. He never said, "*THEY* DID IT! THEY *ALWAYS* DO IT! THEY PICK ME UP AND LOSE MY MONEY AND MESS UP MY BASEBALL CARDS—AND THEY *NEVER* PUT ME DOWN WHEN I ASK THEM TO! WHAT DO YOU THINK, THAT I *FLEW* UP HERE?"

But although Owen would complain to us, he would never complain about us. If he was occasionally capable of being a stoic in the air, he was always a stoic when Mrs. Walker accused him of childish behavior. He would never accuse us. Owen was no rat. As vividly as any number of the stories in the Bible, Owen Meany showed us what a martyr was.

It appeared there were no hard feelings. Although we saved our most ritualized attacks on him for Sunday school, we also lifted him up at other times—more spontaneously. Once someone hooked him by his collar to a coat tree in the elementary-school auditorium; even then, even there, Owen didn't struggle. He dangled silently, and waited for someone to unhook him and put him down. And after gym class someone hung him in his locker and shut the door. "NOT FUNNY! NOT FUNNY!" he called, and called, until someone must have agreed with him and freed him from the company of his jockstrap—the size of a slingshot.



LET me say at the outset that I was a Wheelwright—that was the family name that counted in our town: the Wheelwrights. And Wheelwrights were not inclined toward sympathy to Meanys. We were a matriarchal family because my grandfather died when he was a young man and left my grandmother to carry on, which she managed rather grandly. I am descended from John Adams on my grandmother's side (her maiden name was Bates, and her family came to America on the Mayflower); yet in our town it was my grandfather's name that had the clout, and my grandmother wielded her married name with such a sure sense of self-possession that she might as well have been a Wheelwright *and* an Adams *and* a Bates.

Her Christian name was Harriet, but she was Mrs. Wheelwright to almost everyone—certainly to everyone in Owen Meany's family. I think that Grandmother's final vision of anyone named Meany would have been George Meany—the labor man, the cigar smoker. The combination of unions and cigars did not sit well with Harriet Wheelwright. (To my knowledge, George Meany was not related to the Meany family from my town.)

I grew up in Gravesend, New Hampshire; we didn't have any unions there—a few cigar smokers, but no union men. The town where I was born was purchased from an Indian sagamore in 1638 by the Reverend John Wheelwright, after whom I was named. In New England, the Indian chiefs and higher-ups were called sagamores; although, by the time I was a boy, the only sagamore I knew was a neighbor's dog—a male Labrador retriever named Sagamore (*not,* I think, for his Indian ancestry but because of his owner's ignorance). Sagamore's owner, our neighbor Mr. Fish, always told me that his dog was named for a lake where he spent his summers swimming—"when I was a youth," Mr. Fish would say. Poor Mr. Fish: he didn't know that the lake was named after Indian chiefs and higher-ups, and that naming a stupid Labrador retriever Sagamore was certain to cause some unholy offense.

But Americans are not great historians, and so for years—educated by my neighbor—I thought that "sagamore" was an Indian word for lake. The canine Sagamore was killed by a diaper truck, and I now believe that the gods of those troubled waters of that much abused lake were responsible. It would be a better story, I think, if Mr. Fish had been killed by the diaper truck—but every study of the gods, of everyone's gods, is a revelation of vengeance toward the innocent. (This is a part of my particular faith that meets with opposition from my Congregationalist and Episcopalian and Anglican friends.)

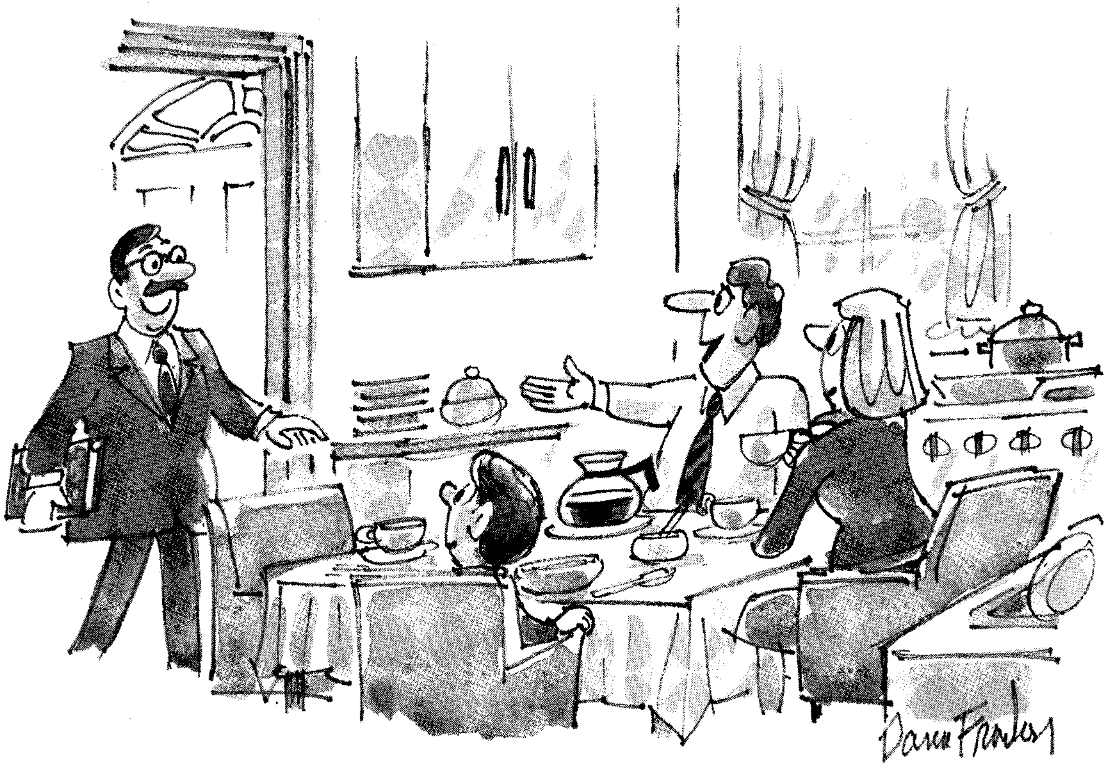
As for my ancestor John Wheelwright, he landed in Boston in 1636, only two years before he bought our town. He was from Lincolnshire, England—the hamlet of Saleby—and nobody knows why he named our town Gravesend. He had no known contact with the British Gravesend, although that is surely where the name of our town came from. Wheelwright was a Cambridge graduate; he'd played football with Oliver Cromwell—whose estimation of Wheelwright (as a football player) was both worshipful and paranoid. Oliver Cromwell believed that Wheelwright was a vicious, even a dirty player, who had perfected the art of tripping his opponents and then falling on them. Gravesend (the British Gravesend) is in Kent—a fair distance from Wheelwright's stamping ground. Perhaps he had a friend from there—maybe it was a friend who had wanted to make the trip to America with Wheelwright but hadn't been able to leave England, or had died on the voyage.

According to Wall's "History of Gravesend, N.H.," the Reverend John Wheelwright had been a good minister of the English church until he began to "question the authority of certain dogmas"; he became a Puritan, and was thereafter "silenced by the ecclesiastical powers, for non-conformity." I feel that my own religious confusion, and stubbornness, owe much to my ancestor, who suffered not only the criticisms of the English church before he left for the new world; once he arrived, he ran afoul of his fellow-Puritans in Boston. Together with the famous Mrs. Hutchinson, the Reverend Mr. Wheelwright was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for disturbing "the civil peace"; in truth, he did nothing more seditious than offer some heterodox opinions regarding the location of the Holy Ghost—but Massachusetts judged him harshly. He was deprived of his weapons; and with his family and several of his bravest adherents he sailed north from Boston to Great Bay, where he must have passed by two earlier New Hampshire outposts—what was then called Strawbery Banke (now Portsmouth), at the mouth of the Pascataqua (now Piscataqua), and the settlement in Dover.

Wheelwright followed the Squamscott River out of Great Bay; he went as far as the falls where the freshwater river met the saltwater river. The forest would have been dense then; the Indians would have showed him how good the fishing was. According to Wall's "History of Gravesend," there were "tracts of natural meadow" and "marshes bordering upon the tidewater."

The local sagamore's name was Watahantowet; instead of his signature, he made his mark upon the deed in the form of his totem—an armless man. Later, there was some dispute—not very interesting—regarding the Indian deed, and more interesting speculation regarding *why* Watahantowet's totem was an armless man. Some said it was how it made the sagamore feel to give up all that land—to have his arms cut off—and others pointed out that earlier "marks" made by Watahantowet revealed that the figure, although armless, held a feather in his mouth; this was said to indicate the sagamore's frustration at being unable to write. But in several other versions of the totem ascribed to Watahantowet, the figure has a tomahawk in its mouth and looks completely crazy—or else he is making a gesture toward peace: no arms, tomahawk in mouth; together, perhaps, they are meant to signify that Watahantowet does not fight. As for the settlement of the disputed deed, you can be sure the Indians were *not* the beneficiaries of the resolution to that difference of opinion.

And later still our town fell under Massachusetts authority—which may explain why to this day residents of Gravesend detest people from Massachusetts. Mr. Wheelwright would move to Maine. He was eighty when he spoke at Harvard, seeking contributions to rebuild a part of the college destroyed by a fire—demonstrating that he bore the citizens of



"Please welcome Lance Hartley, this morning's guest, who is with us to discuss his recently published book."

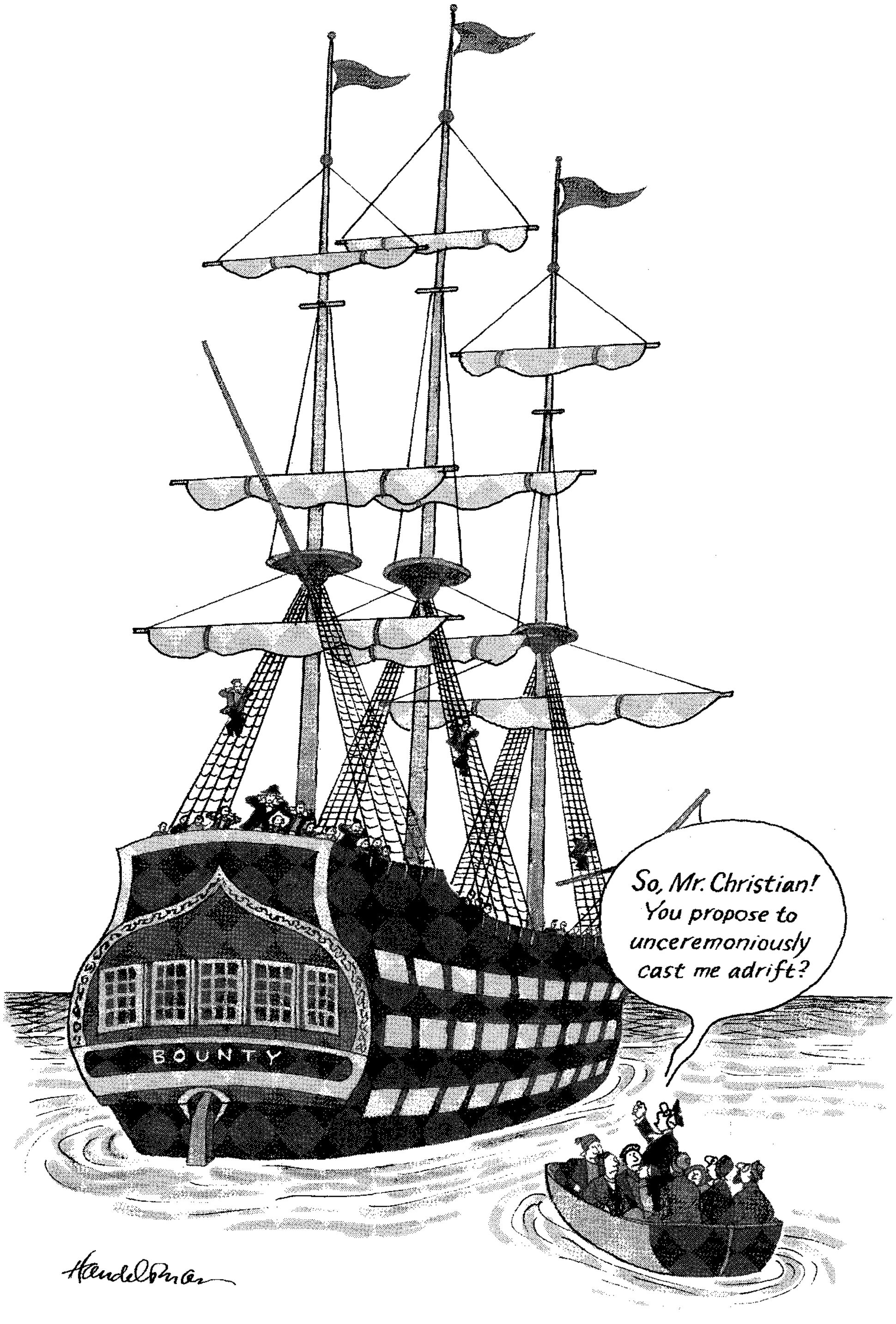
Massachusetts less of a grudge than anyone else from Gravesend would bear them. Wheelwright died in Salisbury, Massachusetts, where he was the spiritual leader of the church, when he was almost ninety.

But listen to the names of Gravesend's founding fathers: you will not hear a Meany among them.

Barlow
Blackwell
Cole
Copeland
Crawley
Dearborn
Hilton
Hutchinson
Littlefield
Read
Rishworth
Smart
Smith
Walker
Wardell
Wentworth
Wheelwright

I doubt it's because she was a Wheelwright that my mother never gave up her maiden name; I think that my mother's pride was independent of her Wheelwright ancestry, and that she would have kept her maiden name if she'd been born a Meany. And I never suffered in those years that I had her name; I was little Johnny Wheelwright, father unknown, and —at the time—that was O.K. with me. I never complained. One day, I always thought, she would tell me about it—when I was old enough to know the story. It was, apparently, the kind of story you had to be "old enough" to hear. It wasn't until she died—without a word to me concerning who my father was—that I felt I'd been cheated out of information I had a right to know; it was only after her death that I felt the slightest anger toward her. Even if my father's identity and his story were painful to my mother—even if their relationship had been so sordid that *any* revelation of it would shed a continuous unfavorable light upon both my parents—wasn't my mother being selfish not to tell me anything about my father?

Of course, as Owen Meany pointed out to me, I was only eleven when she died, and my mother was only thirty; she probably thought she had a lot of time left to tell me the story. She didn't *know* she was going to die, as Owen Meany put it.


So, Mr. Christian! You propose to unceremoniously cast me adrift?
BOUNTY

The crew can no longer tolerate Captain Bligh's ruthless splitting of infinitives.

• •

Owen and I were throwing rocks in the Squamscott, the saltwater river, the tidal river—or, rather, *I* was throwing rocks in the river; Owen's rocks were landing in the mud flats because the tide was out and the water was too far away for Owen Meany's little, weak arm. Our throwing had disturbed the herring gulls that had been pecking in the mud, and they had moved into the marsh grass on the opposite shore of the Squamscott.

It was a hot and muggy summer day; the low-tide smell of the mud flats was more brinish and morbid than usual. Owen Meany told me that my father would know that my mother was dead, and that—when I was old enough—he would identify himself to me.

"If he's alive," I said, still throwing rocks. "If he's alive *and* if he cares that he's my father—if he even *knows* he's my father."

And although I didn't believe him that day, that was the day Owen Meany began his lengthy contribution to my belief in God. Owen was throwing smaller and smaller rocks, but he still couldn't reach the water; there was a certain small satisfaction to the sound the rocks made when they struck the mud flats, but the water was more satisfying than the mud in every way. And almost casually, with a confidence that stood in surprising and unreasonable juxtaposition to his tiny size, Owen Meany told me that he was sure my father was alive, that he was sure my father knew he was my father, and that *God* knew who my father was; even if my father never came forth to identify himself, Owen told me, *God* would identify him for me. "YOUR DAD CAN HIDE FROM YOU," Owen said, "BUT HE CAN'T HIDE FROM GOD!"

And with that announcement Owen Meany grunted as he released a stone that reached the water. We were both surprised; it was the last rock either of us threw that day, and we stood watching the circle of ripples extending from the point of entry until even the gulls were assured we had stopped our disturbance of their universe and they returned to our side of the Squamscott.

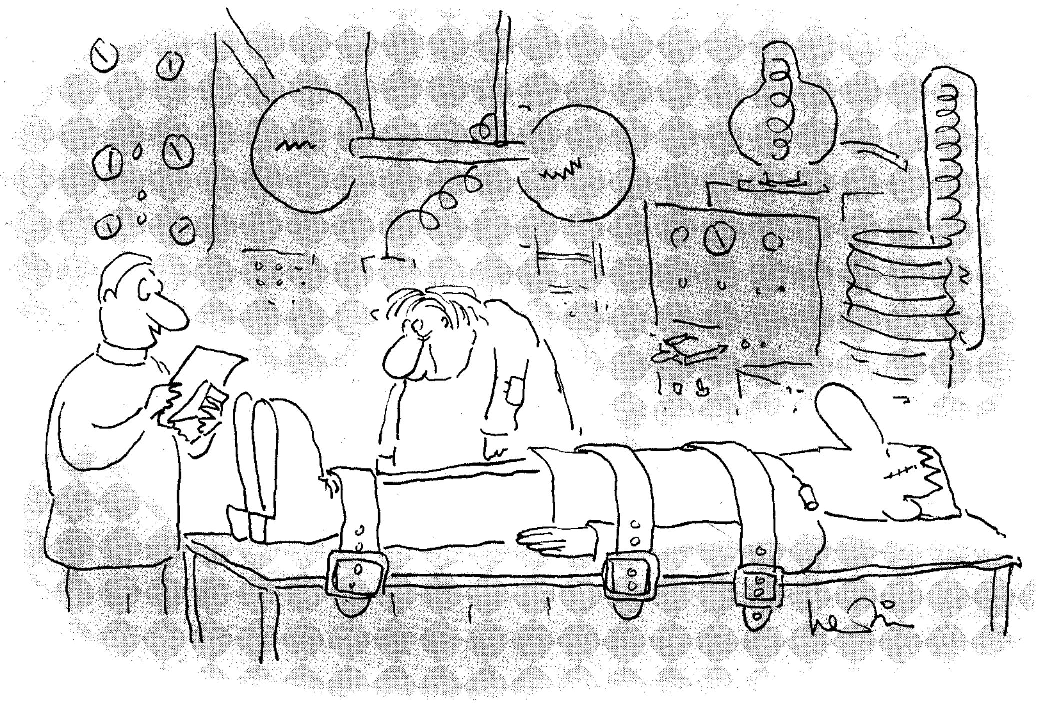
FOR years, there was a most successful salmon fishery on our river; no salmon would be caught dead there now—actually, the only salmon you could find in the Squamscott today *would* be a dead one. Alewives were also plentiful back then—and still were plentiful when I was a boy, and Owen Meany and I used to catch them. Gravesend is only nine miles from the ocean. Although the Squamscott was never the Thames, the big ocean-going ships once made their way to Gravesend on the Squamscott; the channel has since become so obstructed by rocks and shoals that no boat requiring any great draft of water could navigate it. And although Captain John Smith's beloved Pocahontas ended her unhappy life on British soil in the parish churchyard of the original Gravesend, the spiritually armless Watahantowet was never buried in *our* Gravesend. The only sagamore to be given official burial in our town was Mr. Fish's black Labrador retriever, run over by a diaper truck on Front Street and buried—with the solemn attendance of some neighborhood children—in my grandmother's rose garden.

For more than a century, the big business of Gravesend was lumber, which was the first big business of New Hampshire. Although New Hampshire is called the Granite State, granite—building granite, curbstone granite, tombstone granite—came after lumber; it was never the booming business that lumber was. You can be sure that when all the trees are gone, there will be rocks around; but in the case of granite most of it remains underground.

My uncle was in the lumber business—Uncle Alfred, the Eastman Lumber Company; he married my mother's sister, my aunt, Martha Wheelwright. When I was a boy and travelled up north to visit my cousins, I saw log drives and logjams, and I even participated in a few logrolling contests; I'm afraid I was too inexperienced to offer much competition to my cousins. But today my Uncle Alfred's business, which is in his children's hands—my cousins' business, I should say—is real estate. In New Hampshire, that's what you have left to sell after you've cut down the trees.

But there will always be granite in the Granite State, and little Owen Meany's family was in the granite business—not ever a recommended business in our small, seacoast part of New Hampshire, although the Meany Granite Quarry was situated over what geologists call the Exeter Pluton. Owen Meany used to say that we residents of Gravesend were sitting over a bona-fide outcrop of intrusive igneous rock; he would say this with an implied reverence—as if the consensus of the Gravesend community was that the Exeter Pluton was as valuable as a mother lode of gold.

My grandmother, perhaps owing to her ancestors from Mayflower days, was more partial to trees than to rocks. For reasons that were never explained to me, Harriet Wheelwright thought that the lumber business was clean and the granite business was dirty. Since my grandfather's business was shoes, this made no sense to me; but my grandfather died before



"*Well, we got the grant.*"

I was born—his famous decision, to *not* unionize his shoe shop, is only hearsay to me. My grandmother sold the factory for a considerable profit, and I grew up with her opinions regarding how blessed were those who murdered trees for a living and how low were those who handled rocks. We've all heard of lumber barons—my uncle, Alfred Eastman, was one—but who has heard of a rock baron?

The Meany Granite Quarry in Gravesend is inactive now; the pitted land, with its deep and dangerous quarry lakes, is not even valuable as real estate—it never was valuable, according to my mother. She told me that the quarry had been inactive all the years that *she* was growing up in Gravesend, and that its period of revived activity, in the Meany years, was fitful and doomed. All the good granite, Mother said, had been taken out of the ground before the Meanys moved to Gravesend. (As for *when* the Meanys moved to Gravesend, it was always described to me as "about the time you were born.") Furthermore, only a small portion of the granite underground is worth getting out; the rest has defects—or if it's good, it's so far underground that it's hard to get it out without cracking it.

Owen was always talking about cornerstones and monuments—a PROPER monument, he used to say, explaining that what was required was a large, evenly cut, smooth, unflawed piece of granite. The delicacy with which Owen spoke of this—and his own, physical delicacy—stood in absurd contrast to the huge, heavy slabs of rock we observed on the flatbed trucks, and to the violent noise of the quarry, the piercing sound of the rock chisels on the channelling machine—THE CHANNEL BAR, Owen called it—and the dynamite.

I used to wonder why Owen wasn't deaf; that there was something wrong with his voice, and with his size, was all the more surprising when you considered that there was nothing wrong with his ears—for the granite business is extremely percussive.

It was Owen who introduced me to Wall's "History of Gravesend," although I didn't read the whole book until I was a senior at Gravesend Academy, where the tome was required as a part of a town-history project; Owen read it before he was ten. He told me that the book was FULL OF WHEELWRIGHTS.

FEEDING TIME
3:30

• •

I WAS born in the Wheelwright house on Front Street; and I used to wonder why my mother decided to have me and to never explain a word about me—either to me or to her own mother and sister. My mother was not a brazen character. Her pregnancy, and her refusal to discuss it, must have struck the Wheelwrights with all the more severity because my mother had such a tranquil, modest nature.

She'd met a man on the Boston & Maine Railroad: that was all she'd say.

My Aunt Martha was a senior in college, and already engaged to be married, when my mother announced that she wasn't even going to apply for college entrance. My grandfather was dying, and perhaps this focussing of my grandmother's attention distracted her from demanding of my mother what the family had demanded of Aunt Martha: a college education. Besides, my mother argued, she could be of help at home, with her dying father—and with the strain and burden that his dying put upon her mother. And the Reverend Lewis Merrill, the pastor at the Congregational Church and my mother's choirmaster, had convinced my grandparents that my mother's singing voice was truly worthy of professional training. For her to engage in serious voice and singing lessons, the Reverend Mr. Merrill said, was as sensible an "investment," in my mother's case, as a college education.

At this point in my mother's life, I used to feel there was a conflict of motives. If singing and voice lessons were so important and serious to her, why did she arrange to have them only once a week? And if my grandparents accepted Mr. Merrill's assessment of my mother's voice, why did they object so bitterly to her spending one night a week in Boston? It seemed to me that she should have *moved* to Boston and taken lessons every day! But I supposed the source of the conflict was my grandfather's terminal illness—my mother's desire to be of help at home, and my grandmother's need to have her there.

It was an early-morning voice or singing lesson; that was why she had to spend the previous night in Boston, which was an hour and a half from Gravesend by train. Her singing and voice teacher was very popular; early morning was the only time he had for my mother. She was fortunate he would see her at all, the Reverend Lewis Merrill had said, because he normally saw only professionals; although my mother, and my Aunt Martha, had clocked many singing hours in the Congregational Church Choir, Mother was not a "professional." She simply had a lovely voice, and she was engaged—in her entirely unrebellious, even timid way—in training it.

My mother's decision to curtail her education was more acceptable to her parents than to her sister; Aunt Martha not only disapproved—my aunt (who is a lovely woman) resented my mother, if only slightly. My mother had the better voice, she was the prettier. When they were growing up in the big house on Front Street, it was my Aunt Martha who had brought the boys from Gravesend Academy home to meet my grandmother and grandfather—Martha was the older, and the first to bring home "beaus," as my mother called them. But once the boys saw my mother—even before she was old enough to date—that was usually the end of their interest in Aunt Martha.

And now this: an unexplained pregnancy! According to my Aunt Martha, my grandfather was "already out of it"—he was so very nearly dead that he never knew my mother was pregnant, "although she took few pains to hide it," Aunt Martha said. My poor grandfather, in Aunt Martha's words to me, "died worrying why your mother was overweight."

In my Aunt Martha's day, to grow up in Gravesend was to understand that Boston was a city of sin. And even though my mother had stayed in a highly approved and chaperoned women's residential hotel, she had managed to have her "fling," as Aunt Martha called it, with the man she'd met on the Boston & Maine.

My mother was so calm, so unrattled by either criticism or slander, that she was quite comfortable with her sister Martha's use of the word "fling"—in truth, I heard Mother use the word fondly.

"My fling," she would occasionally call me, with the greatest affection. "My little fling!"

It was from my cousins that I first heard that my mother was thought to be "a little simple"; it would have been from *their* mother—from Aunt Martha—that they had heard this. By the time I heard these insinuations—"a little simple"—they were no longer fighting words; my mother had been dead for more than ten years.

SURFACE TENSION

Desire restrained takes a long, cool bath,
indistinct at first in the blue water.

I make out a line of arm, a half-turned breast;
she slides down, runs the tap again, slides farther.

The bath is rippled porcelain, on cast iron,
with claws. A skylight catches sunlight. The room is bare.

This late-days hour was fired in a dry kiln.
Soap goes taut as boysenberries, around air.

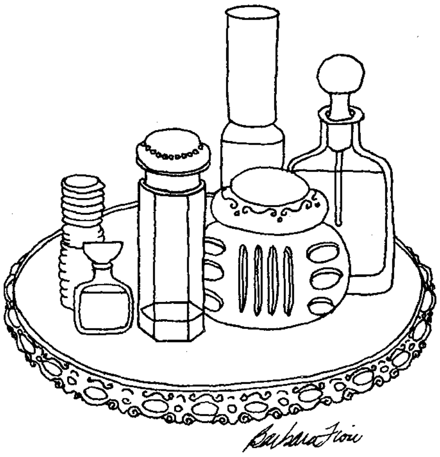
No setting foot yet into the small room:
eyes only. Water any higher could do her harm,

or flood the checkered tiles too far beyond "eureka."
Still, scattered fruit gathers on her raised arm.

—Elizabeth Macklin

• •

Yet my mother was more than a natural beauty with a beautiful voice and questionable reasoning powers; Aunt Martha had good grounds to suspect that my grandmother and grandfather spoiled my mother. It was not just that she was the baby, it was her temperament—she was never angry or sullen, she was not given to tantrums or to self-pity. She had such a sweet-tempered disposition it was impossible to stay angry with her. As Aunt Martha said, "She never appeared to be as assertive as she was." She simply did what she wanted to do, and then said, in her engaging fashion, "*Oh!* I feel *terrible* that what I've done has upset you, and I intend to shower you with such affection that you'll forgive me and love me as much as you would if I'd done the right thing!" And it *worked!*

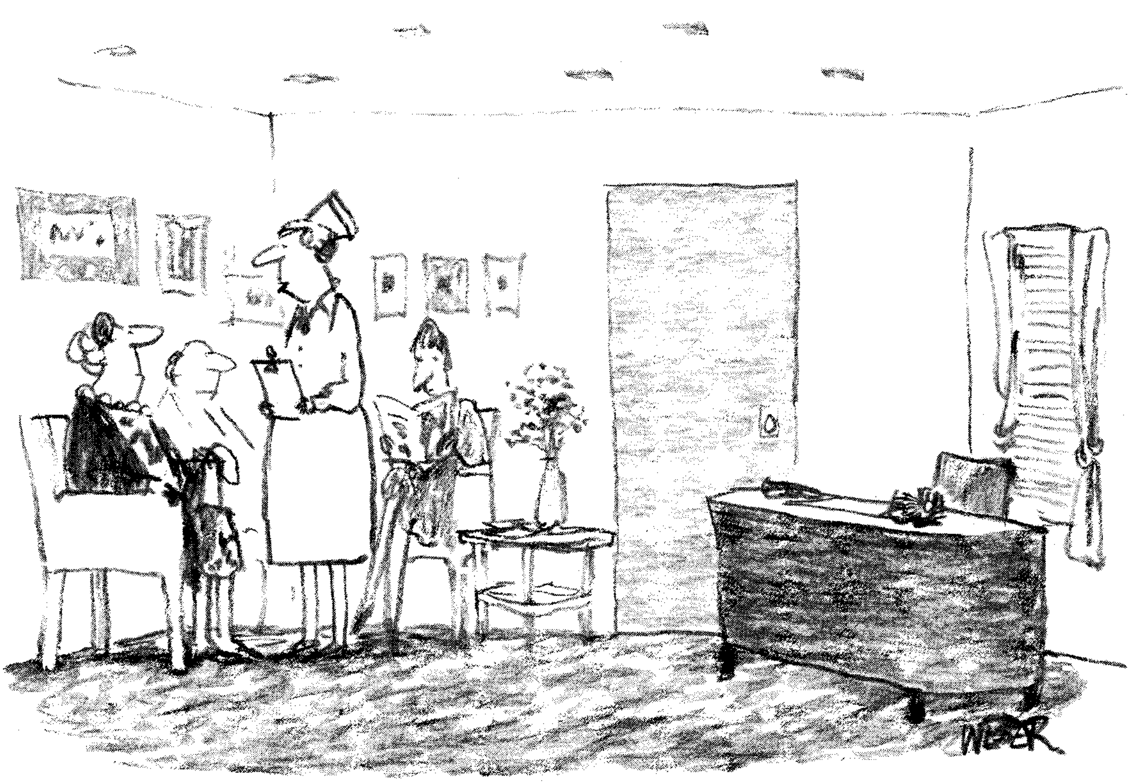


It worked, at least, until she was killed—and she couldn't promise to remedy how upsetting *that* was; there was no way she could make up for that.

And even after she went ahead and had me, unexplained, and named me after the founding father of Gravesend, even after she managed to make all that acceptable to her mother and sister, and to the town (not to mention to the Congregational Church, where she continued to sing in the choir and was often a participant in various parish-house functions)—even after she'd carried off my illegitimate birth (to everyone's satisfaction, or so it *appeared*), she *still* took the train to Boston every Wednesday, she *still* spent every Wednesday night in the dreaded city in order to be bright and early for her voice or singing lesson.

When I got a little older, I resented it—sometimes. Once when I had the mumps, and another time when I had the chicken pox, she cancelled the trip; she stayed with me. And there was another time, when Owen and I had been catching alewives in the tidewater culvert that ran into the Squamscott under the Swasey Parkway and I slipped and broke my wrist; she didn't take the Boston & Maine that week. But all the other times—until I was ten and she married the man who would legally adopt me and become like a father to me; until then—she kept going to Boston, overnight. Until then, she kept singing.

No one ever told me if her voice improved.



"The doctor will see you now, Mrs. Perkins. Please try not to upset him."

• •

THAT'S why I was born in my grandmother's house—a grand, brick, Federal monster of a house. When I was a child, the house was heated by a coal furnace; the coal chute was under the ell of the house where my bedroom was. Since the coal was always delivered very early in the morning, its rumbling down the chute was often the sound that woke me up. On the rare coincidence of a Thursday-morning delivery (when my mother was in Boston), I used to wake up to the sound of the coal and imagine that, at that precise moment, my mother was starting to sing. In the summer, with the windows open, I woke up to the birds in my grandmother's rose garden. And there lies another of my grandmother's opinions, to take root alongside her opinions regarding rocks and trees: anyone could grow mere flowers or vegetables, but a gardener grew roses; Grandmother was a gardener.

The Gravesend Inn was the only other brick building of comparable size to my grandmother's house on Front Street; indeed, Grandmother's house was often mistaken for the Gravesend Inn by travellers following the usual directions given in the center of town: "Look for the big brick place on your left, after you pass the academy."

My grandmother was peeved at this—she was not in the slightest flattered to have her house mistaken for an inn. "This is *not* an inn," she would inform the lost and bewildered travellers, who'd been expecting someone younger to greet them and fetch their luggage. "This is my home," Grandmother would announce. "The inn is further along," she would say, waving her hand in the general direction. "Further along" is fairly specific compared to other New Hampshire forms of directions; we don't enjoy giving directions in New Hampshire—we tend to think that if you don't know where you're going, you don't belong where you are. In Canada, we give directions more freely—to anywhere, to anyone who asks.

In our Federal house on Front Street, there was also a secret passageway—a bookcase that was actually a door that led down a staircase to a dirt-floor basement that was entirely separate from the basement where the coal furnace was. That was just what it was: a bookcase that was a door that led to a place where absolutely nothing happened—it was simply a place to hide. From *what*, I used to wonder. That this secret passageway to nowhere existed in our house did not comfort me; rather, it provoked me to imagine what there might be that was sufficiently threatening to hide *from*—and it is never comforting to imagine that.

I took little Owen Meany into that passageway once, and I got him lost in there, in the dark, and I frightened the hell out of him; I did this to all my friends, of course, but frightening Owen Meany was always more special than frightening anyone else. It was his voice, that ruined voice, that made his fear unique. I have been engaged in private imitations of Owen Meany's voice for more than thirty years, and that voice used to prevent me from imagining that I could ever *write* about Owen, because—on the page—the sound of his voice is impossible to convey. *And* I was prevented from imagining that I could even make Owen a part of *oral* history, because the thought of imitating his voice—in public—is so embarrassing. It has taken me more than thirty years to get up the nerve to share Owen's voice with strangers.

My grandmother was so upset by the sound of Owen Meany's voice, protesting his abuse in the secret passageway, that she spoke to me after Owen had gone home. "I don't want you to describe to me—not ever—what you were doing to that poor boy to make him sound like that; but if you ever do it again, please cover his mouth with your hand," Grandmother said. "You've seen the mice caught in the mousetraps?" she asked me. "I mean *caught*—their little necks *broken*—I mean absolutely *dead*," Grandmother said. "Well, that boy's voice," my grandmother told me, "that boy's voice could bring those mice back to life!"

And it occurs to me now that Owen's voice *was* the voice of all those murdered mice coming back to life—with a vengeance.

I don't mean to make my grandmother sound insensitive. She had a maid named Lydia, a Prince Edward Islander, who was our cook and housekeeper for years and years. When Lydia developed a cancer and her right leg was amputated, my grandmother hired two other maids—one to look after Lydia. Lydia never worked again. She had her own room, and her favorite wheelchair routes through the huge house, and she became the entirely served invalid that, one day, my grandmother had imagined she herself might become—with someone like Lydia looking after her. Delivery boys and guests in our house frequently mistook Lydia for my grandmother, because Lydia looked quite regal in her wheelchair and she was about my grandmother's age. She had tea with my grandmother every afternoon, and she played cards with my grandmother's bridge club—with those very same ladies whose tea she had once fetched. Shortly before Lydia died, even my Aunt Martha was struck by the resemblance Lydia bore to my grandmother. Yet to various guests and delivery boys Lydia would always say—with a certain indignation of tone that was borrowed from my grandmother—"I am *not* Mrs. Wheelwright, I am Mrs. Wheelwright's former maid." It was exactly in the manner that Grandmother would claim that her house was *not* the Gravesend Inn.

So my grandmother was not without humanity. And if she wore cocktail dresses when she labored in her rose garden, they were cocktail dresses that she no longer intended to wear to cocktail parties. Even in her rose garden, she did not want to be seen underdressed. If the dresses got too dirty from gardening, she threw them out. When my mother suggested to her that she might have them cleaned, my grandmother said, "What? And have those people at the cleaners' wonder what I was doing in a dress to make it *that* dirty?"

From my grandmother I learned that logic is relative.

But this story really *is* about Owen Meany, about how I have apprenticed myself to his voice. His cartoon voice has made an even stronger impression on me than has my grandmother's imperious wisdom.

Grandmother's memory began to elude her near the end. Like many old people, she had a firmer grasp of her own childhood than she had of the lives of her own children, or her grandchildren, or her great-grandchildren. The more recent the memory was, the more poorly remembered. "I remember you as a little boy," she told me not long ago, "but when I look at you now, I don't know who you are." I told her I occasionally had the same feeling about myself. And in one conversation about her memory I asked her if she remembered little Owen Meany.

"The labor man?" she said. "The unionist!"

"No, *Owen* Meany," I said.

"No," she said. "Certainly not."

"The granite family?" I said. "The Meany Granite Quarry. Remember?"

"Granite," she said with distaste. "Certainly not!"

"Maybe you remember his voice?" I said to my grandmother when she was almost a hundred years old.

But she was impatient with me; she shook her head. I was getting up the nerve to imitate Owen's voice.

"I turned out the lights in the secret passageway, and scared him," I reminded Grandmother.

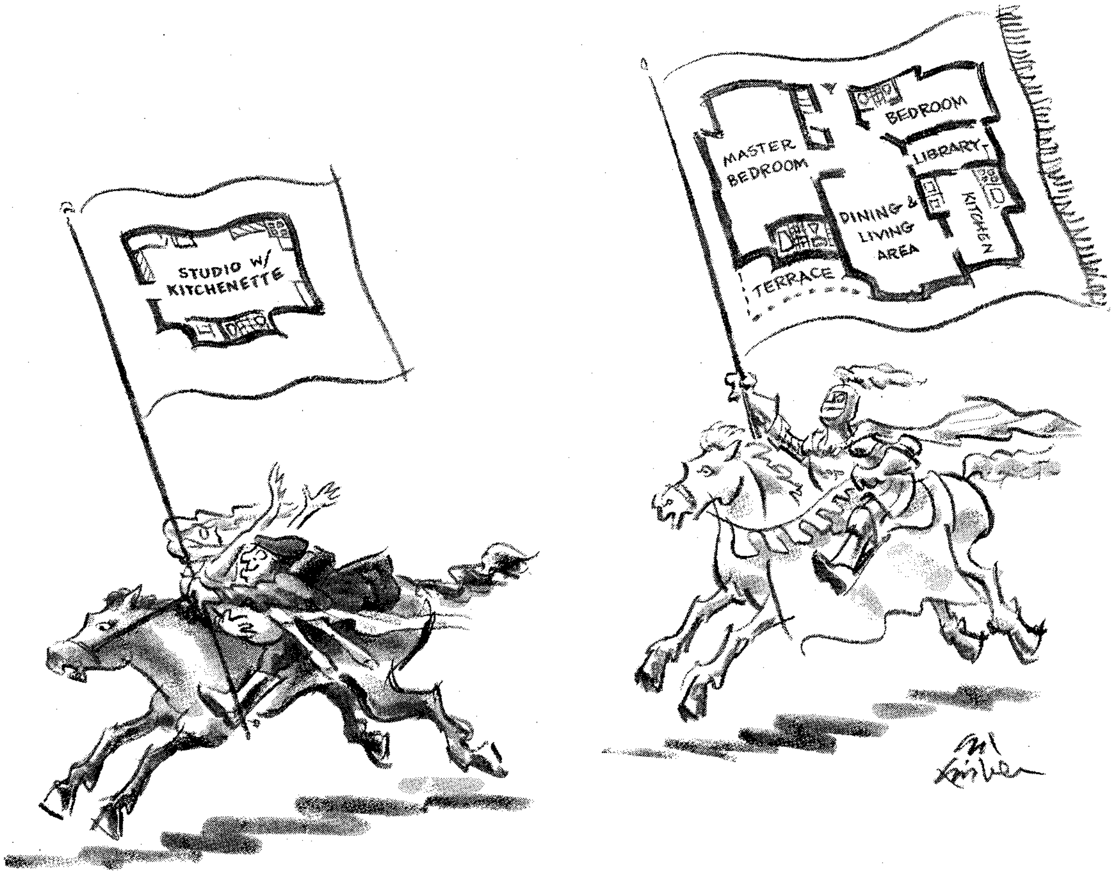
"You were always doing that," she said indifferently. "You even did that to Lydia—when she still had both her legs."

"TURN ON THE LIGHT!" said Owen Meany. "SOMETHING IS TOUCHING MY FACE! TURN ON THE LIGHT! IT'S SOMETHING WITH A TONGUE! SOMETHING IS LICKING ME!" Owen Meany cried.

"It's just a cobweb, Owen," I remember telling him.

"IT'S TOO WET FOR A COBWEB! IT'S A *TONGUE!* TURN ON THE LIGHT!"

"Stop it!" my grandmother told me. "I remember, I remember—for God's sake," she said. "Don't *ever* do that again!" she told me. But it was from my grand-



mother that I gained the confidence that I could imitate Owen Meany's voice at all. Even when her memory was shot, Grandmother remembered Owen's voice; if she remembered him as the instrument of her daughter's death, she didn't say. Near the end, Grandmother didn't remember that I had become an Anglican—and a Canadian.

THE Meanys, in my grandmother's lexicon, were not Mayflower stock. They were not descended from the Founding Fathers; you could not trace a Meany back to John Adams. They were descended from later immigrants; they were Boston Irish. The Meanys made their move to New Hampshire from Boston, which was never England; they'd also lived in Concord, New Hampshire, and in Barre, Vermont—those were much more working-class places than Gravesend. Those were New England's true granite kingdoms. My grandmother believed that mining and quarrying, of all kinds, was *grovelling* work—and that quarries and miners were more closely related to moles than to men. As for the Meanys: none of the family was especially small, except for Owen.

And for all the dirty tricks we played on him, he tricked us only once. We were allowed to swim in one of his father's quarries only if we entered and left the water one at a time and with a stout rope tied around our waists. One did not actually *swim* in those quarry lakes, which were rumored to be as deep as the ocean. They were as cold as the ocean, even in late summer; they were as black and still as pools of oil. It was not the cold that made you want to rush out as soon as you'd jumped in; it was the unmeasured depth—our fear of what was on the bottom, and how far below us the bottom was.

Owen's father, Mr. Meany, insisted on the rope—*insisted* on one-at-a-time, in-and-out. It was one of the few parental rules from my childhood that remained unbroken, except once—by Owen. It was never a rule that any of us cared to challenge; no one wanted to untie the rope and plunge without hope of rescue toward the unknown bottom.

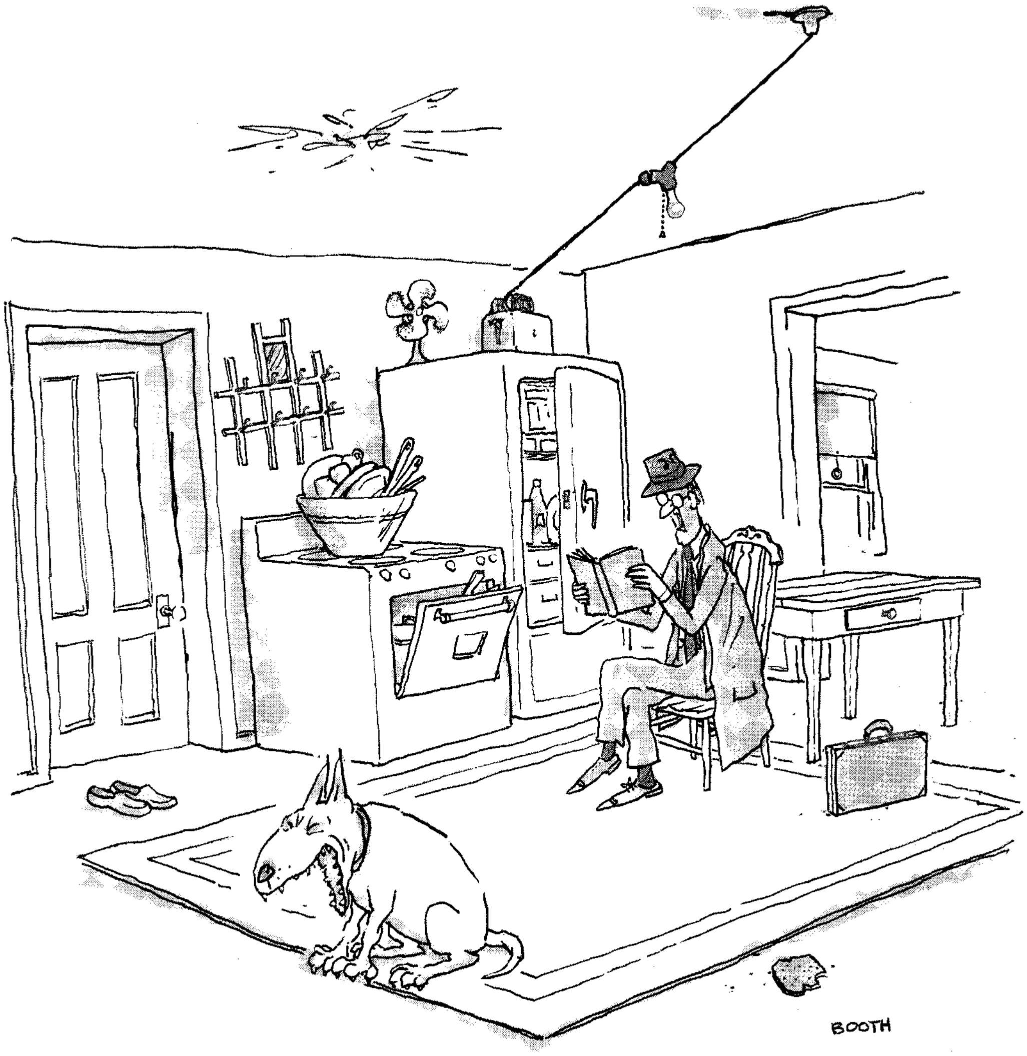
But one fine August day, Owen Meany untied the rope, underwater, and he swam underwater to some hidden crevice in the rocky shore while we waited for him to rise. When he didn't surface, we pulled up the rope. Because we believed that Owen was nearly weightless, we refused to believe what our arms told us—that he was not at the end of the rope. We didn't believe he was gone until we had the bulging knot at the rope's end out of the water. What a silence that was!—interrupted only by the drops of water from the rope falling into the quarry.

No one called his name; no one dove in to look for him. In that water, no one could *see!* I prefer to believe that we *would* have gone in to look for him—if he'd given us just a few more seconds to gather up our nerve—but Owen decided that our response was altogether too slow and uncaring. He swam out from the crevice at the opposite shore; he moved as lightly as a water bug across the terrifying hole that reached, we were sure, to the bottom of the earth. He swam to us, angrier than we'd ever seen him.

"TALK ABOUT HURTING SOMEONE'S FEELINGS!" he cried. "WHAT WERE YOU WAITING FOR? DO YOU THINK I'M A *FISH?* WASN'T ANYONE GOING TO *TRY* TO FIND ME?"

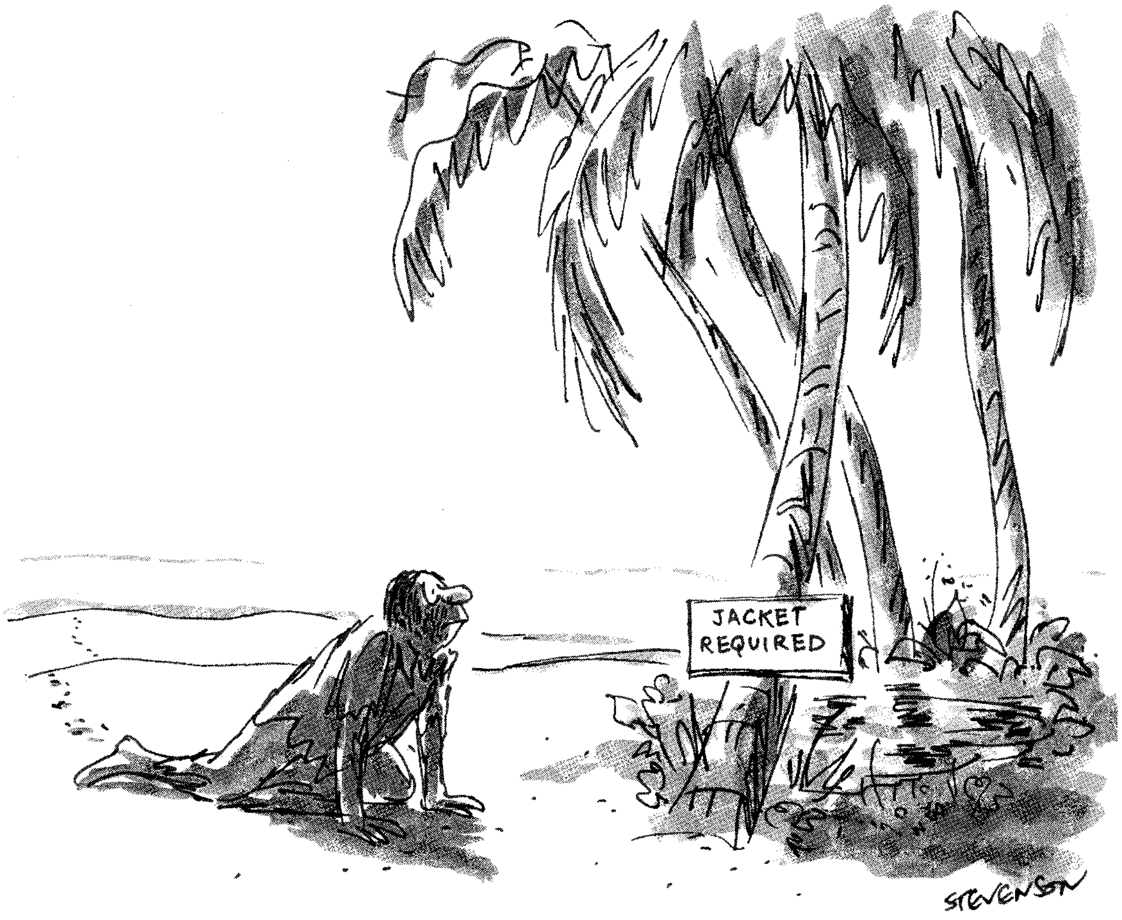
"You scared us, Owen," one of us said. We were too scared to defend ourselves, if there was any defending ourselves—ever—in regard to Owen.

"YOU LET ME DOWN!" Owen said. "YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! YOU JUST WATCHED ME DROWN! I'M AL-



"Possessing both sexes, the Hypoplectrus gutavarius mates with another Hypoplectrus gutavarius, each switching roles after each encounter."

• •



READY DEAD!" he told us. "REMEMBER THAT: YOU LET ME DIE."

• •

WHAT I remember best is Sunday school in the Episcopal Church. Both Owen and I were newcomers there. When my mother married the *second* man she met on the train, she and I changed churches; we left the Congregational Church for the church of my adoptive father—he was, my mother said, an Episcopalian, and although I never saw any evidence that he was a particularly serious Episcopalian, my mother insisted that she and I move with him to *his* church. It was a move that disturbed my grandmother, because we Wheelwrights had been in the Congregational Church ever since we got over being Puritans ("ever since we *almost* got over being Puritans," my grandmother used to say, because—in her opinion—Puritanism had never entirely relinquished its hold on us Wheelwrights). Some Wheelwrights—not only our founding father—had even been in the ministry; in the last century, the Congregational ministry. And the move upset the pastor of the Congregational Church, the Reverend Lewis Merrill; he'd baptized me, and he was woebegone at the thought of losing my mother's voice from the choir—he'd known her since she was a young girl, and (my mother always said) he'd been especially supportive of her when she'd been calmly and good-naturedly insisting on her privacy regarding my origins.

The move did not sit well with me, either. But Owen Meany's manner of making and keeping a thing mysterious was to allude to something too dark and terrible to mention. *He* was changing churches, he said, TO ESCAPE THE CATHOLICS—or, actually, it was his father who was escaping and defying the Catholics by sending Owen to Sunday school, to be confirmed, in the Episcopal Church. When Congregationalists turned into Episcopalians, Owen told me, there was nothing to it; it simply represented a move *upward* in church formality—in HOCUS-POCUS, Owen called it. But for Catholics to move to the Episcopal Church was not only a move *away* from the hocus-pocus; it was a move that risked eternal damnation. Owen used to say, gravely, that his father would surely be damned for initiating the move, but that the Catholics had committed an UNSPEAKABLE OUTRAGE—that they had insulted his father and mother, irreparably.

When I would complain about the kneeling, which was new to me—not to mention the abundance of litanies and recited creeds in the Episcopal service—Owen would tell me that I knew nothing. Not only did Catholics kneel and mutter litanies and creeds without ceasing, but they ritualized any hope of contact with God to such an extent that Owen felt they'd interfered with his ability to pray—to talk to God DIRECTLY, as Owen put it. And then there was confession! Here I was complaining about some simple kneeling, but what did I know about confessing my sins? Owen said the pressure to confess—as a Catholic—was so great that he'd often made things up in order to be forgiven for them.

"But that's crazy!" I said.

Owen agreed. And what was the cause of the falling out between the Catholics and Mr. Meany, I always asked. Owen never told me. The damage was irreparable, he would repeat; he would refer only to the UNSPEAKABLE OUTRAGE.

Perhaps my unhappiness at having traded the Congregational Church for the Episcopal—in combination with Owen's satisfaction at having ESCAPED the Catholics—contributed to my pleasure in our game of lifting Owen Meany up in the air. It occurs to me now that we were all guilty of thinking of Owen as existing only for our entertainment, but in my case—especially in the Episcopal Church—I think I was also guilty of envying him. I believe my participation in abusing him in Sunday school was faintly hostile and inspired by the greatest difference between us:

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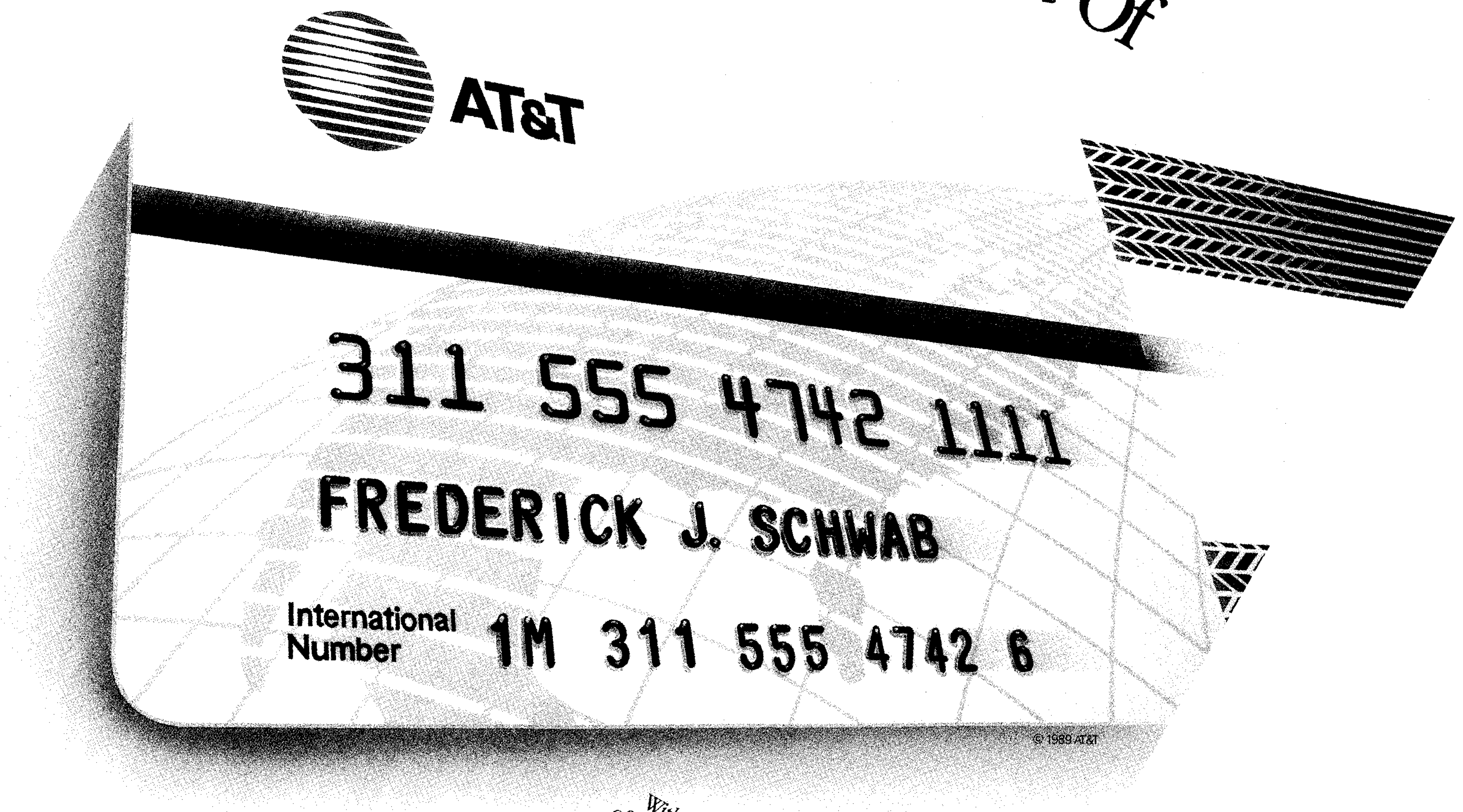
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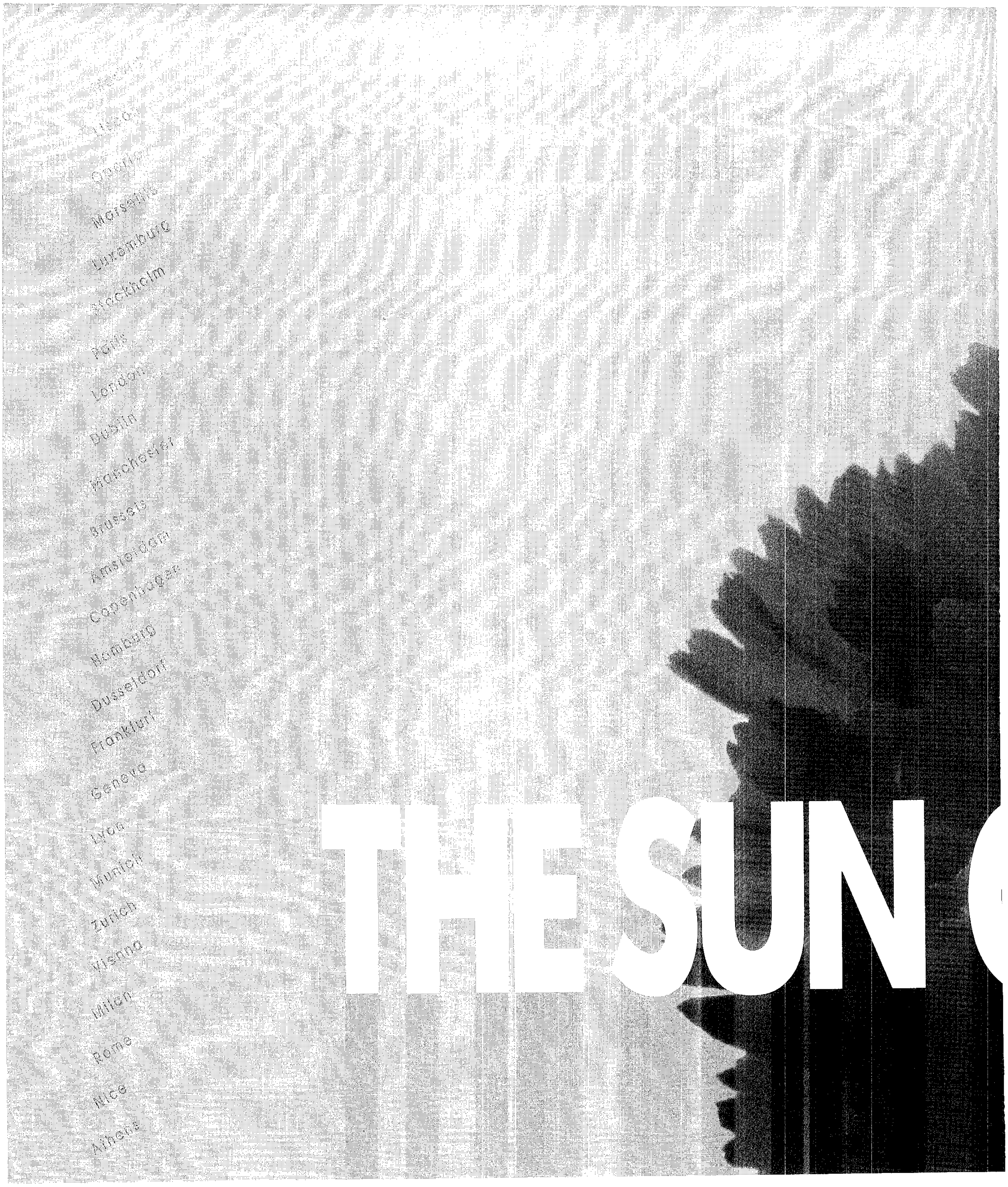
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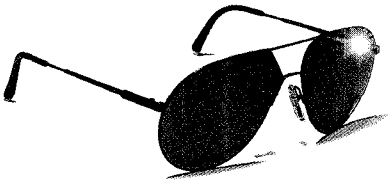

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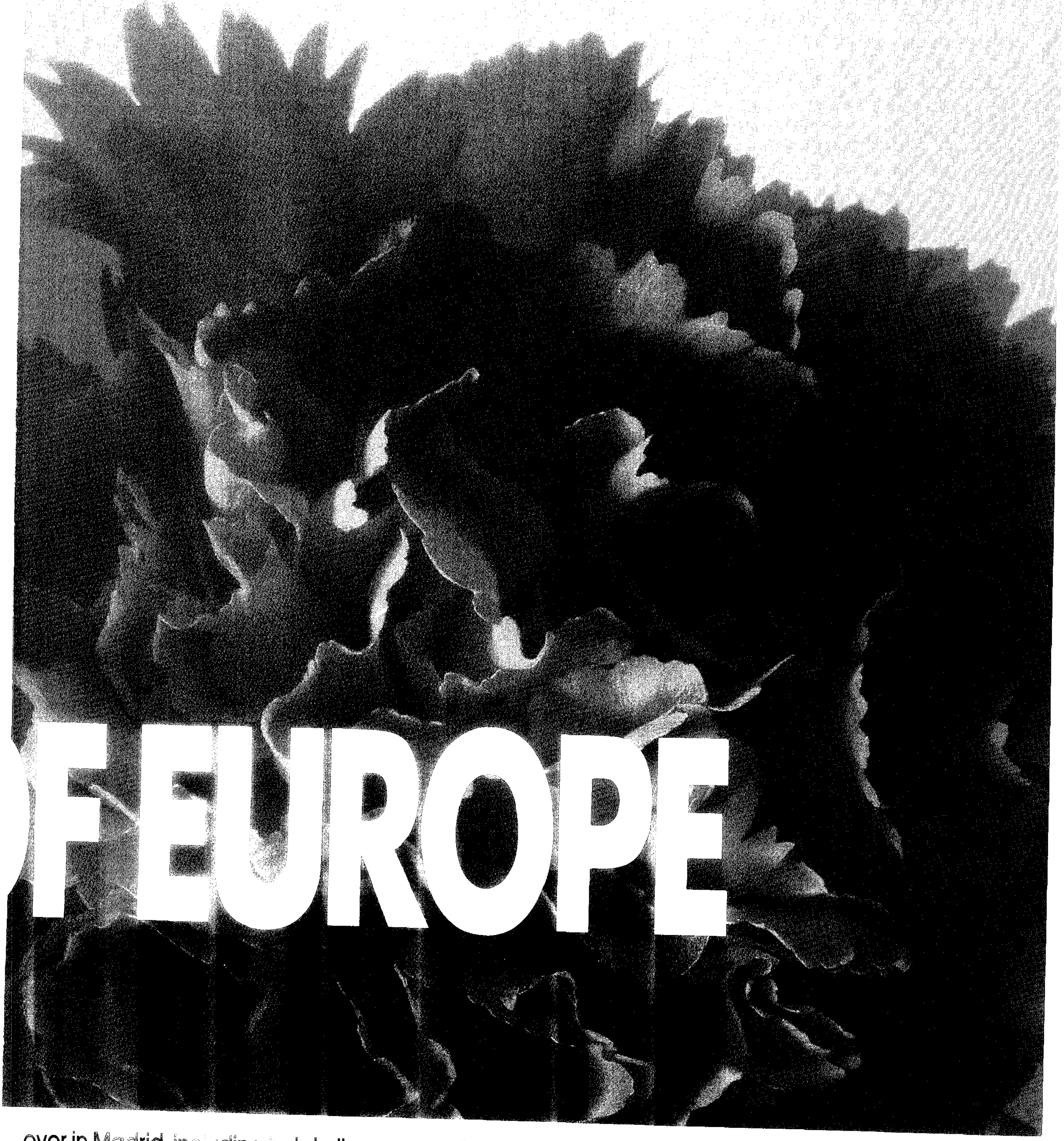

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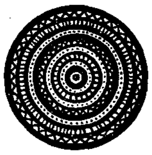
he believed more than I did, and although I was always aware of this, I was most aware in church. I disliked the Episcopalians because they appeared to believe more—or in more *things*—than the Congregationalists believed; and because I believed very little, I had been more comfortable with the Congregationalists, who demanded a minimum of participation from worshippers.

Owen disliked the Episcopalians, too, but he disliked them far less than he had disliked the Catholics; in his opinion, both of them believed *less* than he believed—but the Catholics had interfered with Owen's beliefs and practices *more*. He was my best friend, and with our best friends we overlook many differences; but it wasn't until we found ourselves attending the same Sunday school, and the same church, that I was forced to accept that my best friend's religious faith was more certain (if not always more dogmatic) than anything I heard in either the Congregational or the Episcopal Church.

I don't remember Sunday school in the Congregational Church at all—although my mother claimed that this was always an occasion whereat I ate a lot, both in Sunday school and at various parish-house functions. I vaguely remember the cider and the cookies; but I remember emphatically—with a crisp, winter-day brightness—the white clapboard church, the black steeple clock, and the services that were always held on the second floor in an informal, well-lit, meetinghouse atmosphere. You could look out the tall windows at the branches of the towering trees. By comparison, the Episcopal services were conducted in a gloomy, basement atmosphere. It was a stone church, and there was a ground-floor or even underground mustiness to the place, which was overcrowded with dark wood bric-a-brac, sombre with dull-gold organ pipes, garish with confused configurations of stained glass—through which not a single branch of a tree was visible.



When I complained about church, I complained about the usual things a kid complains about: the claustrophobia, the boredom. But Owen complained *religiously*. "A PERSON'S FAITH GOES AT ITS OWN PACE," Owen Meany said. "THE TROUBLE WITH CHURCH IS THE SERVICE. A SERVICE IS CONDUCTED FOR A MASS AUDIENCE. JUST WHEN I START TO LIKE THE HYMN, EVERYONE PLOPS DOWN TO PRAY. JUST WHEN I START TO HEAR THE PRAYER, EVERYONE POPS UP TO SING. *AND WHAT DOES THE STUPID SERMON* HAVE TO DO WITH GOD? WHO KNOWS WHAT GOD THINKS OF CURRENT EVENTS? WHO CARES?"

To these complaints, and others like them, I could respond only by picking up Owen Meany and holding him above my head.

"YOU tease Owen too much," my mother used to say to me. But I don't remember much teasing, not beyond the usual lifting him up—unless Mother meant that I failed to realize how serious Owen was; he was insulted by jokes of any kind. After all, he did read Wall's "History of Gravesend" before he was ten; this was not lighthearted work, this was never reading that merely skipped along. And he also read the Bible—not by the time he was ten, of course; but he actually read the whole thing.

And then there was the question of Gravesend Academy; that was the question for every boy born in Gravesend—the academy did not admit girls in those days. I was a poor student; and even though my grandmother could well have afforded the tuition, I was destined to stay at Gravesend High School—until my mother married someone on the academy faculty and he legally adopted me. Faculty children—faculty brats, we were called—could automatically attend the academy.

What a relief this must have been to my grandmother; she'd always resented that her own children couldn't go to Gravesend Academy—she'd had daughters. My mother and my Aunt Martha were high-school girls—what they saw of Gravesend Academy was only at the dating end, although my Aunt Martha put this to good use: she married a Gravesend Academy boy (one of the few who didn't prefer my mother), which made my cousins sons of alumni, which favored their admittance, too.

But Owen Meany was a legitimate Gravesend Academy candidate: he was a brilliant student; he was the kind of student who was *supposed* to go to Gravesend. He could have applied and got in—and got a full scholarship, too, since the Meany Granite Company was never flourishing and his parents could not have afforded the tuition. But one day when my mother was driving Owen and me to the beach—Owen and I were ten—my mother said, "I hope you never stop helping Johnny with his homework, Owen, because when you're both at the academy, the homework's going to be much harder—especially for Johnny."

"BUT I'M NOT GOING TO THE ACADEMY," Owen said.

"Of course you are!" my mother said. "You're the best student in New Hampshire—maybe in the whole country!"

"THE ACADEMY'S NOT FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME," Owen said. "THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IS FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME."

I wondered for a moment if he meant *for small people*—that public high schools were for people who were exceptionally small—but my mother was thinking far ahead of me, and she said, "You'll get a full scholarship, Owen. I hope your parents know that. You'll go to the academy absolutely free."

"YOU HAVE TO WEAR A COAT AND TIE EVERY DAY," Owen said. "THE SCHOLARSHIP DOESN'T BUY THE COATS AND TIES."

"That can be arranged, Owen," my mother said, and I could tell that she meant *she'd* arrange it—if no one else would, she'd buy him every coat and tie he could possibly have use for.

"THERE'S ALSO DRESS SHIRTS, AND SHOES," Owen said. "IF YOU GO TO SCHOOL WITH RICH PEOPLE, YOU DON'T WANT TO LOOK LIKE THEIR *SERVANTS*." I now suppose that my mother could hear Mr. Meany's prickly, working-class politics behind this observation.

"Everything you need, Owen," my mother said. "It will be taken care of."

We were in Rye, passing the First Church, and the breeze from the ocean was already strong. A man with a great stack of roofing shingles in a wheelbarrow was having difficulty keeping the shingles from blowing away; the ladder, leaning against the vestry roof, was also in danger of being blown over. The man seemed in need of a coworker—or, at least, of another pair of hands.

"WE SHOULD STOP AND HELP THAT MAN," Owen observed, but my mother was pursuing a theme and therefore she'd noticed nothing unusual out the window.

"Would it help if I talked to your parents about it, Owen?" my mother asked.

"THERE'S ALSO THE MATTER OF THE BUS," Owen said. "TO GO TO HIGH SCHOOL, YOU CAN TAKE A BUS. I DON'T LIVE RIGHT IN TOWN, YOU KNOW. HOW WOULD I GET TO THE ACADEMY? IF I WAS A DAY STUDENT, I MEAN—HOW WOULD I GET THERE? HOW WOULD I GET BACK HOME? BECAUSE MY PARENTS WOULD NEVER LET ME LIVE IN A DORMITORY. THEY NEED ME AT HOME. ALSO, DORMITORIES ARE EVIL. SO HOW *DO* THE DAY STUDENTS GET TO SCHOOL AND GET HOME?" he asked.

"Someone drives them," my mother said. "*I* could drive you, Owen—at least until you got a driver's license of your own."

"NO, IT WON'T WORK," Owen said. "MY FATHER'S TOO BUSY, AND MY MOTHER DOESN'T DRIVE."

Mrs. Meany—both my mother and I knew—not only didn't drive; she never left the house. And even in the summer the windows in that house were never open; his mother was allergic to dust, Owen had explained. Every day of the year, Mrs. Meany sat indoors behind the windows bleared and streaked with grit from the quarry. She wore an old set of pilot's headphones (the wires dangling, unattached) because the sound of the channelling machine—the channel bar, and the rock chisels—disturbed her. On blasting days, she played the phonograph very loudly—the big-band sound, the needle skipping occasionally when the dynamite was especially nearby and percussive.

Mr. Meany did the shopping. He drove Owen to Sunday school, and picked him up—although he did not attend the Episcopal services himself. It was apparently enough revenge upon the Catholics to be sending Owen there; either the added defiance of his own attendance was unnecessary or else Mr. Meany had suffered such an outrage at the hands of the Catholic authorities that he was rendered unreceptive to the teachings of *any* church.

He was, my mother knew, quite unreceptive on the subject of Gravesend Academy. "There is the interests of the town," he once said in town meeting, "and then there is the interests of

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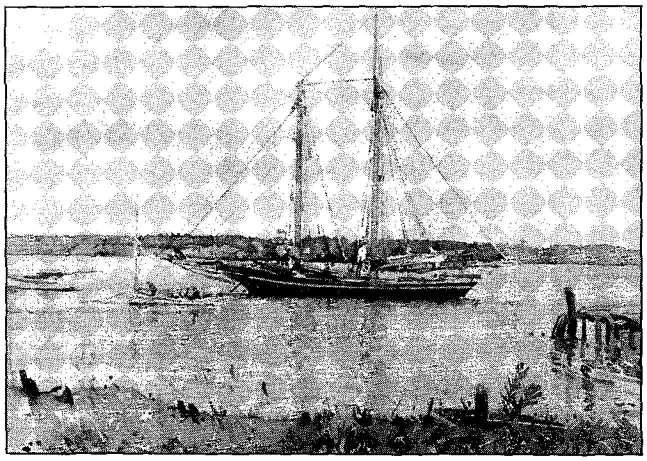

"Ships, Cotuit," 9½"×13½", Watercolor, s.l.r., July 20, 1890

An intimate friend of John Singer Sargent, Boit exhibited with Sargent in several joint watercolor shows in Boston and New York City. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, viewed a show in New York and promptly bought the entire exhibit — 38 watercolors by Boit and 45 by Sargent! Known for his crisp, bright watercolors, Boit is represented in galleries abroad and, of course, at the MFA, Boston.

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them!" This regarded the request of the academy to widen the saltwater river and dredge a deeper low-tide channel at a point in the Squamscott that would improve the racing course for the academy crew; several shells had become mired in the mud flats at low tide. The part of the river the academy wished to widen was a peninsula of tidewater marsh bordering the Meany Granite Quarry; it was totally unusable land, yet Mr. Meany owned it and he resented that the academy wanted to scoop it away—"for purposes of recreation!" he said.

"We're talking about mud, not granite," a representative of the academy had remarked.

"I'm talkin' about us and *them!*" Mr. Meany had shouted, in what is now recorded as a famous town meeting. In order for a town meeting to be famous in Gravesend, it is only necessary that there be a good *row.* The Squamscott was widened; the channel was dredged. If it was just mud, the town decided, it didn't matter whose mud it was.

"You're going to the academy, Owen," my mother told him. "That's all there is to it. If any student ever belonged in a proper school, it's you—that place was made with you in mind or it was made for no one."

"WE MISSED DOING A GOOD DEED," Owen said morosely. "THAT MAN SHINGLING THE CHURCH—HE NEEDED HELP."

"Don't argue with me, Owen," my mother said. "You're going to the academy, if I have to adopt you. I'll *kidnap* you, if I have to," she said.

But no one on this earth was ever as stubborn as Owen Meany; he waited a mile before he said another word, and then he said, "NO. IT WON'T WORK."

GRAVESEND ACADEMY was founded in 1781 by the Reverend Emery Hurd, a follower of the original Wheelwright's original beliefs, a childless Puritan with an ability—according to Wall—for "Oration on the advantages of Learning and its happy Tendency to promote Virtue and Piety." What would the Reverend Mr. Hurd have thought of Owen Meany? Hurd conceived of an academy whereat "no vicious lad, who is liable to contaminate his associates, is allowed to remain an hour"; whereat "the student shall bear the laboring oar"—and learn heartily from his labor!

As for the rest of his money, Emery Hurd left it for "the education and Christianization of the American Indians." In his waning years—ever watchful that Gravesend Academy devote itself to "pious and charitable purposes"—the Reverend Mr. Hurd was known to patrol Water Street in downtown Gravesend, looking for youthful offenders: specifically, young men who would not doff their hats to him, and young ladies who would not curtsy. In payment for such offense, Emery Hurd was happy to give these young people a piece of his mind; near the end, only pieces were left.

I saw my grandmother lose her mind in pieces like that; when she was so old that she could remember almost nothing—certainly not Owen Meany, and not even me—she would occasionally reprimand the whole room, and anyone present in it. "What has happened to tipping the hat?" she would howl. "Bring back the bow!" she would croon. "Bring back the curtsy!"

"Yes, Grandmother," I would say.

"Oh, what do you know?" she would say. "Who are you, anyway?" she would ask.

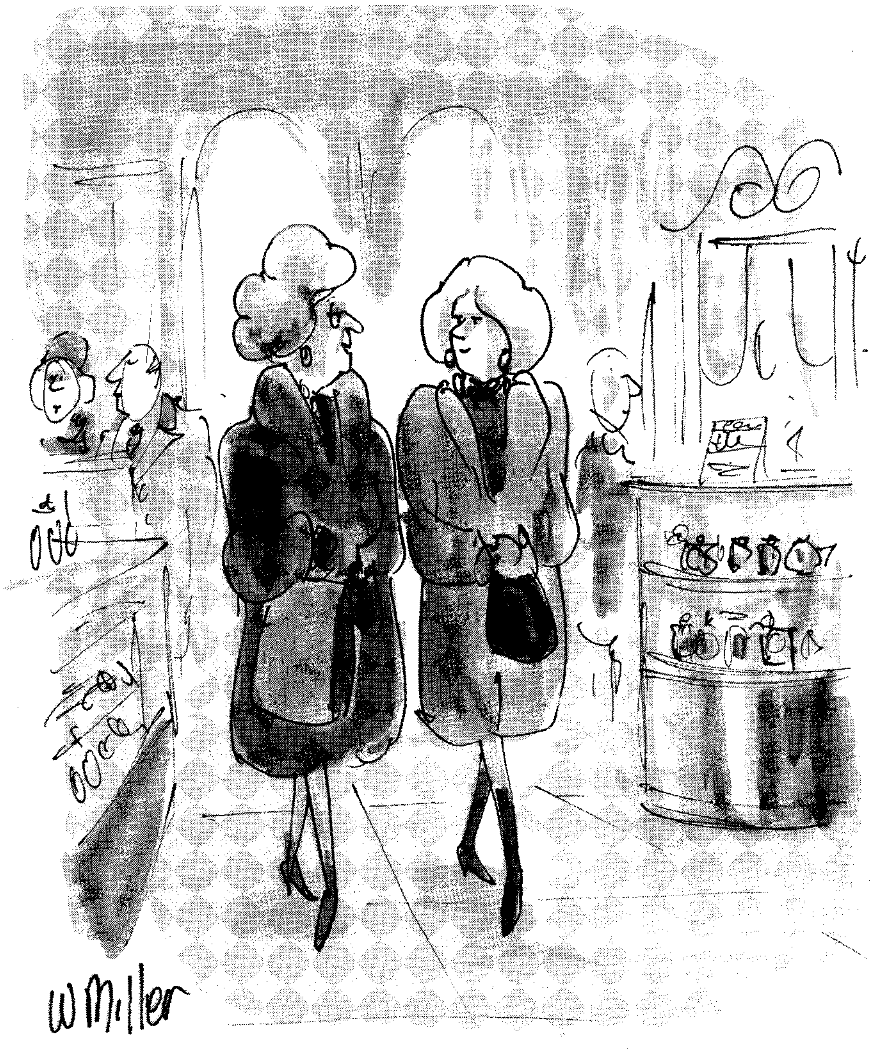
"HE IS YOUR GRANDSON—JOHNNY," I would say, in my best imitation of Owen Meany's voice.

And my Grandmother would say, "My God, is *he* still here? Is that funny little guy still here? Did you lock him in the passageway, Johnny?"

LATER in that summer when we were ten, Owen told me that my mother had been to the quarry to visit his parents.

"What did they say about it?" I asked him.

They hadn't mentioned the visit, Owen told me, but he knew she'd been there. "I COULD SMELL HER PERFUME," Owen said. "SHE MUST HAVE BEEN THERE QUITE A WHILE BECAUSE THERE WAS ALMOST AS MUCH OF HER



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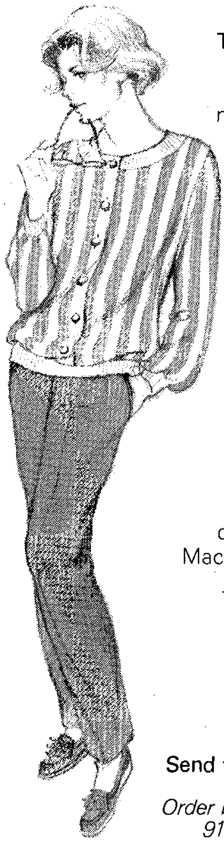

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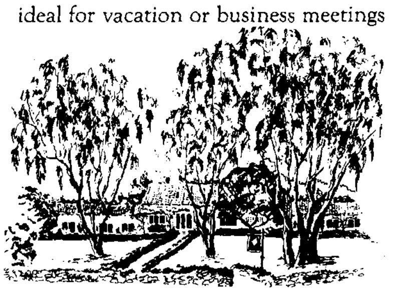

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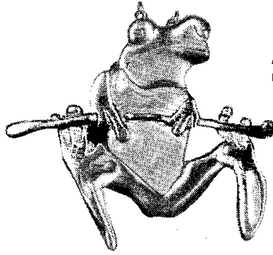

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PERFUME AS THERE IS IN *YOUR* HOUSE. MY MOTHER DOESN'T WEAR PERFUME," he added.

This was unnecessary to tell me. Not only did Mrs. Meany not go outdoors; she refused to *look* outdoors. When I saw her positioned in the various windows of Owen's house, she was always in profile to the window, determined *not* to be observing the world—yet making an obscure point: by sitting in profile, possibly she meant to suggest that she had not entirely turned her back on the world, either. It occurred to me that the Catholics had done this to her—whatever it was, it surely qualified for the unmentioned UNSPEAKABLE OUTRAGE that Owen claimed his father and mother had suffered. There was something about Mrs. Meany's obdurate self-imprisonment that smacked of religious persecution—if not eternal damnation.

"How did it go with the Meanys?" I asked my mother.

"They told Owen I was there?" she asked.

"No, they didn't tell him. He recognized your perfume."

"He would," she said, and smiled. I think she knew Owen had a crush on her—all my friends had crushes on my mother. And if she had lived until they'd all been teen-agers, their degrees of infatuation with her would doubtless have deepened, and worsened, and been wholly unbearable—both to them and to me.

Although my mother resisted the temptation of my generation—that is to say, she restrained herself from picking up Owen Meany—she could not resist touching Owen. You simply had to put your hands on Owen. He was mortally cute; he had a furry animal attractiveness—except for the nakedness of his nearly transparent ears, and the rodentlike way they protruded from his sharp face. My grandmother said that Owen resembled an embryonic fox. When touching Owen, one avoided his ears; they looked as if they would be cold to the touch. But not my mother; she even rubbed warmth into his rubbery ears. She hugged him, she kissed him, she touched noses with him. She did all these things as naturally as if she were doing them to me, but she did none of these things to my other friends—not even to my cousins. And Owen responded to her quite affectionately; he'd blush sometimes, but he'd always smile. His standard, nearly

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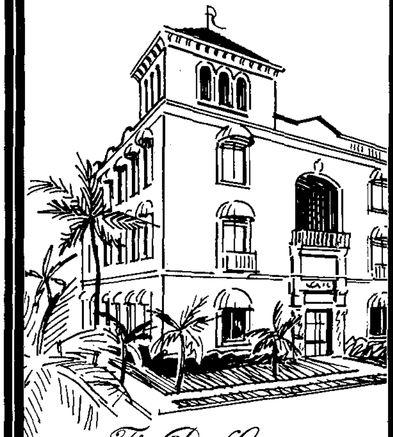

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constant frown would disappear; an embarrassed beam would overcome his face.

I remember him best when he stood level to my mother's girlish waist; the top of his head, if he stood on his toes, would brush against her breasts. When she was sitting down and he would go over to her, to receive his usual touches and hugs, his face would be dead-even with her breasts. My mother was a sweater girl; she had a lovely figure, and she knew it, and she wore those sweaters of the period that showed it.

A measure of Owen's seriousness was that we could talk about the mothers of all our friends, and Owen could be extremely frank in his appraisal of my mother to me; he could get away with it, because I knew he wasn't joking. Owen never joked.

"YOUR MOTHER HAS THE BEST BREASTS OF ALL THE MOTHERS." No other friend could have said this to me without starting a fight.

"You really think so?" I asked him.

"ABSOLUTELY, THE BEST," he said.

"What about Mrs. Wiggin?" I asked him.

"TOO BIG," Owen said.

"Mrs. Webster?" I asked him.

"TOO LOW," Owen said.

"Mrs. Merrill?" I asked.

"VERY FUNNY," Owen said.

"Miss Judkins?" I said.

"I DON'T KNOW," he said. "I CAN'T REMEMBER THEM. BUT SHE'S NOT A MOTHER."

"Miss Farnum!" I said.

"YOU'RE JUST FOOLING AROUND," Owen said peevishly.

"Caroline Perkins!" I said.

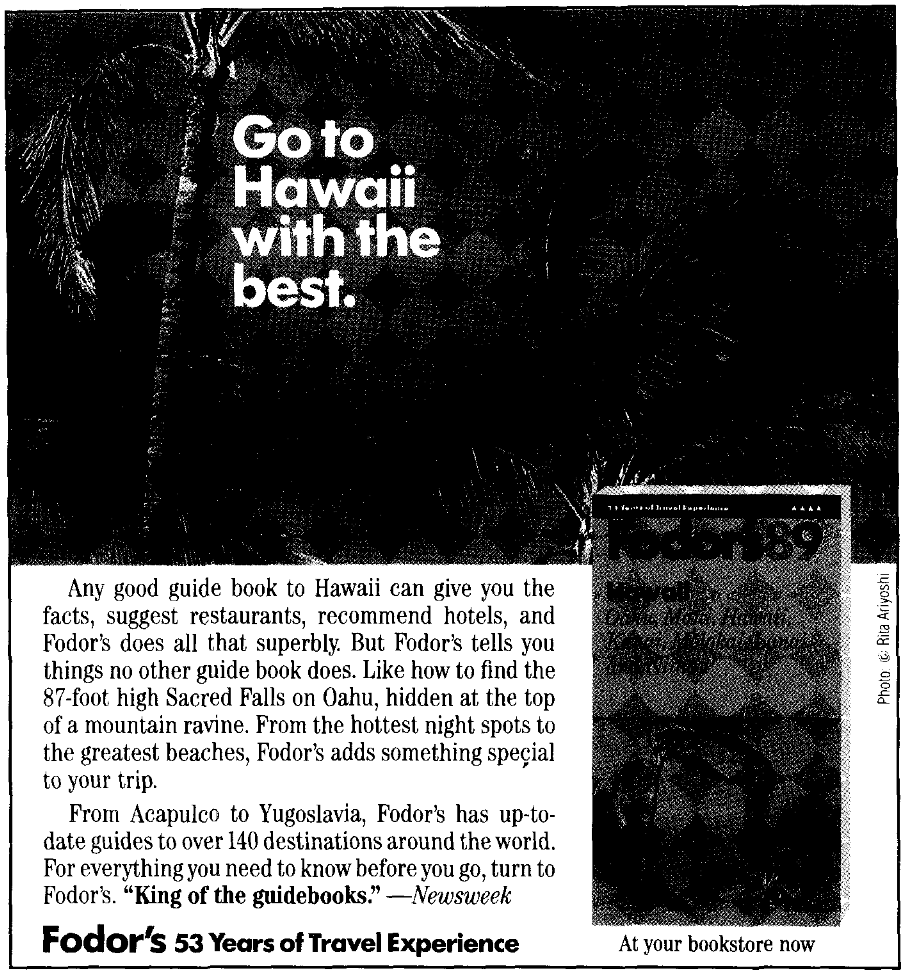
"MAYBE ONE DAY," he said seriously. "BUT SHE'S NOT A MOTHER, EITHER."

"Irene Babson!" I said.

"DON'T GIVE ME THE SHIVERS," Owen said. "YOUR MOTHER'S THE ONE," he said worshipfully. "AND SHE SMELLS BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE, TOO," he added. I agreed with him about this; my mother always smelled wonderful.

Your own mother's bosom is a strange topic of conversation in which to indulge a friend, but my mother *was* an acknowledged beauty, and Owen possessed a completely reliable frankness; you could trust him, absolutely.

My mother was often our driver. She drove me out to the quarry to play with Owen; she picked Owen up to come play with me—and she drove him



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home. The Meany Granite Quarry was about three miles out of the center of town, not too far for a bike ride—except that the ride was all uphill. Mother would often drive me out there with my bike in the car, and then I could ride my bike home; or Owen would ride his bike to town, and she'd take him *and* his bike back. The point is, she was so often our chauffeur that he might have seemed to her like a second son. And to the extent that mothers are the chauffeurs of small-town life, Owen had reason to identify her as more *his* mother than his own mother was.

When we played at Owen's, we rarely went inside. We played in the rock piles, in and around the pits, or down by the river, and on Sundays we sat in or on the silent machinery, imagining ourselves in charge of the quarry—or in a war. Owen seemed to find the inside of his house as strange and oppressive as I did. When the weather was inclement, we played at my house—and since the weather in New Hampshire is inclement most of the time, we played most of the time at my house.

AND *play* is all we did, it seems to me now. We were both eleven the summer my mother died. It was our last year in Little League, which we were already bored with. Baseball, in my opinion, *is* boring; one's last year in Little League is only a preview of the boring moments in baseball that lie ahead for many Americans. Unfortunately, Canadians play and watch baseball, too. It is a game with a lot of waiting in it; it is a game with increasingly heightened anticipation of increasingly limited action. At least, Little Leaguers play the game more quickly than grownups—thank God! *We* never devoted the attention to spitting, or to tugging at our armpits and crotches, that is the essential expression of nervousness in the adult sport. But you still have to wait between pitches, and wait for the catcher and umpire to examine the ball after the pitch—and wait for the catcher to trot out to the mound to say something to the pitcher about how to throw the ball, and wait for the manager to waddle onto the field and worry (with the pitcher and the catcher) about the possibilities of the *next* pitch.

That day, in the last inning, Owen and I were just waiting for the game to be over. We were so bored we had no idea that someone's life was about to be over, too. Our side was up. Our team was far behind—we had been substituting second-string players for first-string players so often and so randomly that I could no longer recognize half of our own batters—and I had lost track of my place in the batting order. I wasn't sure when I got to be up to bat next, and I was about to ask our nice, fat manager and coach, Mr. Chickering, when Mr. Chickering turned to Owen Meany and said, "You bat for Johnny, Owen."

"But I don't know when I bat," I said to Mr. Chickering, who didn't hear me; he was looking off the field somewhere. He was bored with the game, too, and he was just waiting for it to be over, like the rest of us.

"*I* KNOW WHEN YOU BAT," Owen said. That was forever irritating about Owen; he kept track of things like that. He hardly ever got to play the stupid game, but he paid attention to all the boring details anyway.

"IF HARRY GETS ON, I'M ON DECK," Owen said. "IF BUZZY GETS ON, I'M UP."

"Fat chance," I said. "Or is there only one out?"

"TWO OUT," Owen said.

Everyone on the bench was looking off the field somewhere—even Owen now—and I turned my attention to the intriguing object of their interest. Then I saw her: my mother. She'd just arrived. She was always late; she found the game boring, too. She had an instinct for arriving just in time to take me and Owen home. She was even a sweater girl in the summer, because she favored those summer-weight jersey dresses; she had a nice tan, and the dress was a simple white cotton one—clinging about the bosom and waist, full skirt below—and she wore a red scarf to hold her hair up, off her bare shoulders. She wasn't watching the game. She was standing well down the left-field foul line, past third base, looking into the sparse stands, the almost empty bleacher seats—trying to see if there was anyone she knew there, I guess.

I realized that everyone was watching her. This was nothing new for me. Everyone was always staring at my mother, but the scrutiny seemed especially intense that day, or else I am remembering it acutely because it was the last time I saw her alive. The pitcher was looking at home plate, the catcher was waiting for the ball; the batter, I suppose, was waiting for the ball, too; but even the fielders had turned their heads to gape at my mother. Everyone on our bench was watching her—Mr. Chickering the hardest; maybe Owen the next hardest; maybe me the least. Everyone in the stands stared back at her as she looked them over.

It was ball four. Maybe the pitcher had one eye on my mother, too. Harry Hoyt walked. Buzzy Thurston was up, and Owen was on deck. He got up from the bench and looked for the smallest bat. Buzzy hit an easy grounder, a sure out, and my mother never turned her head to follow the play. She started walking parallel to the third-base line; she passed the third-base coach; she was still gazing into the stands when the shortstop bobbled Buzzy Thurston's easy grounder, and the runners were safe all around.

Owen was up.

As a testimony to how boring this particular game was—and how very much lost it was, too—Mr. Chickering told Owen to swing away; Mr. Chickering wanted to go home, too.

Usually he said, "Have a good eye, Owen!" That meant, *Walk!* That meant, Don't lift the bat off your shoulder. That meant, Don't swing at *anything*.

But this day Mr. Chickering said, "Hit away, kid!"

"Knock the cover off the ball, Meany!" someone on the bench said; then he fell off the bench laughing.

Owen, with dignity, stared at the pitcher.

"Give it a ride, Owen!" I called.

"Swing away, Owen!" said Mr. Chickering. "Swing away!"

Now the guys on our bench got into

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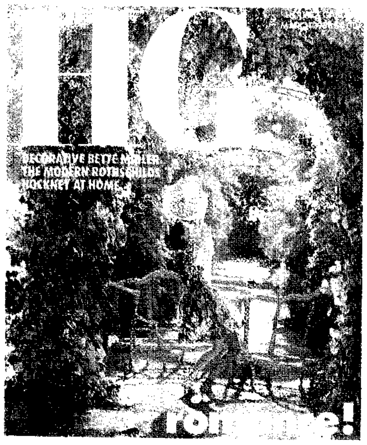

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it; it was time to go home. Let Owen swing and miss the next three pitches, and then we were free. In addition, we awaited the potential comedy of his wild, weak swings.

The first pitch was way outside and Owen let it go.

"Swing!" Mr. Chickering said. "Swing away!"

"THAT WAS TOO FAR AWAY!" Owen said. He was strictly by the book, Owen Meany; he did everything by the rules.

The second pitch almost hit him in the head and he had to dive forward—across the dirt surrounding home plate and into the infield grass. Ball two. Everyone laughed at the explosion of dust created by Owen whacking his uniform; yet Owen made us all wait while he cleaned himself off.

My mother had her back to home plate; she had caught someone's eye—someone in the bleacher seats—and she was waving to whoever it was. She was past the third-base bag—on the third-base line, but still nearer third base than home plate—when Owen Meany started his swing. He appeared to start his swing before the ball left the pitcher's hand—it was a fastball, such as they are in Little League play, but Owen's swing was well ahead of the ball, with which he made astonishing contact (a little in front of home plate, about chest high). It was the hardest I'd ever seen him hit a ball, and the force of the contact was such a shock to Owen that he actually stayed on his feet—for once, he didn't fall down.

The crack of the bat was so unusually sharp and loud for a Little League game that the noise captured even my mother's wandering attention. She turned her head toward home plate—I guess to see who had hit such a *shot*—and the ball struck her left temple, spinning her so quickly that one of her high heels broke and she fell forward, facing the stands, her knees splayed apart, her face hitting the ground first because her hands never moved from her sides (not even to break her fall), which later gave rise to the speculation that she was dead before she touched the earth.

Whether she died *that* quickly I don't know; but she was dead by the time Mr. Chickering reached her. He was the first one to her. He lifted her head, then turned her face to a slightly more comfortable position; someone

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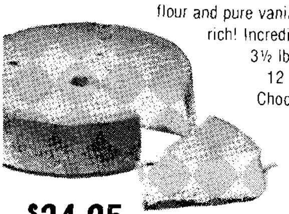

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said later that he closed her eyes before he let her head rest back on the ground. I remember that he pulled the skirt of her dress down—it was as high as mid-thigh—and he pinched her knees together. Then he stood up, removing his warmup jacket, which he held in front of him as a bullfighter holds his cape. I was the first of the players to cross the third-base line, but—for a fat man—Mr. Chickering was agile. He caught me, and he threw the warmup jacket over my head. I could see nothing; it was impossible to struggle effectively.

"No, Johnny! No, Johnny!" Mr. Chickering said. "You don't want to see her, Johnny," he said.

Your memory is a monster; *you* forget—*it* doesn't. It simply files things away. It keeps things for you, or hides things from you—and summons them to your recall with a will of its own. You think you have a memory; but it has you!

Later, I would remember everything. In revisiting the scene of my mother's death, I can remember everyone who was in the stands that day; I remember who wasn't there, too—and what everyone said, and didn't say, to me. But the first visit to that scene was very bare of details. I remember Chief Pike, our Gravesend chief of police. (In later years, I would date his daughter.) Chief Pike got my attention only because of the ridiculous question he asked—and how much more absurd was his elaboration on his question!

"Where's the ball?" the police chief asked—after the area had been cleared, as they say. My mother's body was gone and I was sitting on the bench in Mr. Chickering's lap, his warmup jacket still over my head—now because I liked it that way: because *I* had put it there.

"The ball?" Mr. Chickering said. "You want the fucking *ball*?"

"Well, it's the murder weapon, kind of," Chief Pike said. His Christian name was Ben. "The instrument of death, I guess you'd call it," Ben Pike said.

"The murder weapon!" Mr. Chickering said, squeezing me as he spoke. We were waiting for either my grandmother or my mother's new husband to come get me. "The instrument of death!" Mr. Chickering said. "Jesus Christ, Ben—it was a *baseball*!"

"Well, where *is* it?" Chief Pike said. "If it killed somebody, I'm supposed

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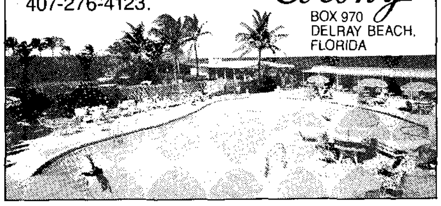

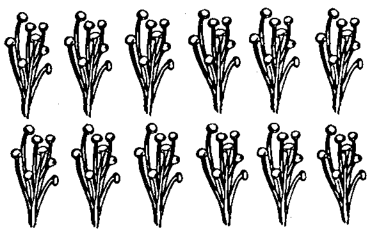

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to see it—actually, I'm supposed to *possess* it."

"Don't be an asshole, Ben," Mr. Chickering said.

"Did one of your kids take it?" Chief Pike asked our fat coach and manager.

"Ask *them*—don't ask *me!*" Mr. Chickering said.

All the players had been made to stand behind the bleachers while the police took photographs of my mother. They were still standing there, peering out at the murderous field through the empty seats. Several townspeople were standing with the players—mothers and dads and ardent baseball fans. Later, I would remember Owen's voice, speaking to me in the darkness—because my head was under the warmup jacket.

"I'M SORRY!"

Bit by bit, over the years, all of it would come back to me—everyone who was standing there behind the bleachers, *and* everyone who had gone home.

But then I took the warmup jacket off my head and all I knew was that Owen Meany was *not* standing there behind the bleachers. Mr. Chickering must have observed the same thing.

"Owen!" he called.

"He went home!" someone called back.

"He had his bike!" someone said.

I could easily imagine him struggling with his bike up the Maiden Hill Road—first pedalling, then wobbling, then getting off to walk his bike, all the while in view of the river. In those days, our baseball uniforms were an itchy wool, and I could see Owen's uniform, heavy with sweat, the number 3 too big for his back—when he tucked his shirt into his pants, he tucked in half the number, too, so that anyone passing him on the Maiden Hill Road would have thought he was number 2.

I suppose there was no reason for him to wait; my mother always gave Owen and his bike a ride home after our Little League games.

Of course, I thought, Owen has the ball. He was a collector; one only had to consider his baseball cards. "After all," Mr. Chickering would say—in later years—"it was the only decent hit the kid ever made, the only real wood he ever got on the ball. And even then it was a foul ball. Not to mention that it killed someone." —JOHN IRVING

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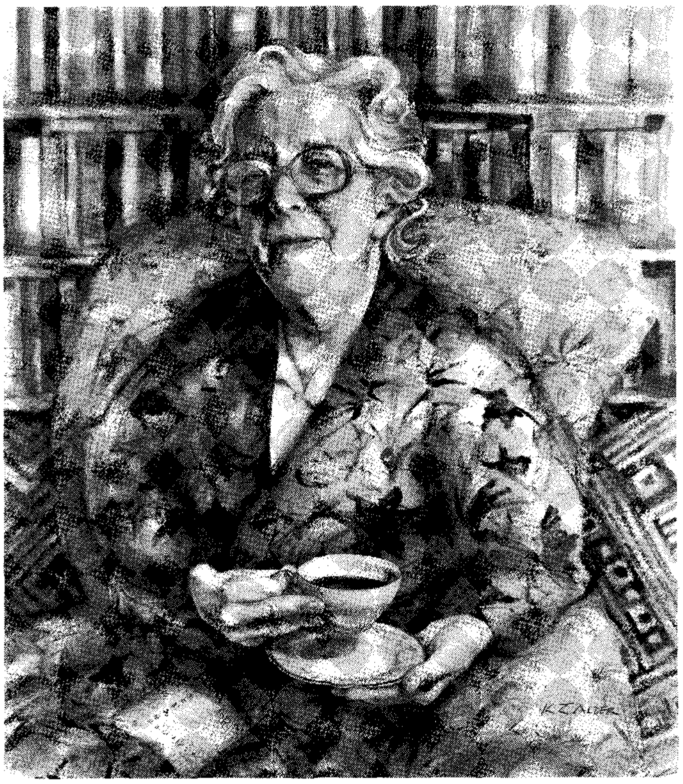


THE guest speaker at a recent dinner for Oxford and Cambridge alumni, held at the Harvard Club in Manhattan, was introduced by the master of ceremonies as possessing a résumé that read like a James Bond thriller: after working in North Africa for Britain's Special Operations Executive during the Second World War, the speaker had entered the Foreign Office and held diplomatic postings in places as diverse as Moscow, in the immediate post-Stalin years, and Ulan Bator, in Outer Mongolia. A latecomer who had not heard the speaker's name might have been surprised to see that the person approaching the podium was not one of the urbane, sleek-haired gentlemen dotted around the dining hall but a white-haired woman in her late sixties, who smiled genially at the company as she made her way forward in a somewhat heavy, rocking gait. One couldn't help thinking that she would probably make a very good Miss Marple.

Daphne Margaret Sybil Désirée Park, C.M.G., O.B.E., was not in fact addressing the audience in her capacity as a former member of the British Foreign Office: Miss Park is at present the principal of Somerville College, one of the two remaining single-sex colleges at Oxford University. Somerville, named after the Victorian scientist and mathematician Mary Somerville, was founded as a nondenominational college in 1879; it is the second of the university's five original women's colleges. Somerville has a long reputation of academic excellence, and is the alma mater of Margaret Thatcher, Iris Murdoch, Indira Gandhi, Shirley Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Daphne Park herself. Former principals of Somerville were drawn from the ranks of notable academics, as is traditionally the case for heads of Oxford colleges, but Daphne Park was elected to the position following a distinguished and eventful diplomatic career, which took her not only to the places noted in her introduction but also to Léopoldville, in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire), during the years of independence and subsequent civil war; Lusaka, Zambia, in the mid-sixties; and Hanoi, in the years following the Tet offensive and Ho Chi Minh's death.

Those who are not members of Oxford's inner circle or Fellows of the college inevitably approach Miss Park with an acute awareness of her former diplomatic life, and with—let us confess—a less pressing interest in her role as the head of a women's college of some three hundred and fifty undergraduates. But although Miss Park is forthcoming with reminiscences of her years in the Foreign Office, it is by her present role that she defines herself. Both in lectures and in conversation she makes copious use of anecdotes drawn from her diplomatic life, but they are included in the speeches primarily as a trick of the trade, a crowd-pleaser, and in conversation they are less usually volunteered than obligingly related by way of answer to the questions she is inevitably asked. Her tone is revealing: brisk and matter-of-fact, tinged with a certain fondness, but never wistful or nostalgic. It is clear to her listeners that she is energetically engaged with the present, and that if anything tempts her thoughts astray it is the future and not the past, for all its glamour.

Not unexpectedly, she has shown little interest in writing her memoirs. Like many people with a deep-seated optimism and faith in their own resources, she is, by her own admission, not self-reflective by nature. "Everyone, after all, has had interesting experiences," she said over drinks one afternoon in the Harvard Club. She was wearing a suit of deep-blue silk patterned with white sprigs of flowers. Old, "good" jewelry bedecked her ample person—pieces that one would imagine had been in the family for years. She has the snowy, silky hair and fine skin of the British, and looks as though she had not grown up anywhere other than under the protective fog of the British climate; certainly, one would never guess at her East African childhood—an experience remarkable even in a life crowded with remarkable events. "Now, that *is* something I have often thought of writing about," she said, folding her hands almost demurely in her lap. "Not about me but about my parents and how they came to Africa."

Miss Park's father, John Alexander Park, while a young man attending Queen's University, in Northern Ireland, had contracted tuberculosis, and his family sent him to South Africa for a "cure" in the healthy climate. Within a very short period of time after his arrival, in 1894, he had given away all the money they had supplied him with. "What exactly happened to it I don't know, but he was fairly shortly working in the mines—perhaps not the best place for someone with t.b.," Miss Park observed dryly.

He later ran a store on the high veldt, then became interested in seeing a bit more of the countryside, and so walked north through what was then Rhodesia, settling in Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1905, where he began to grow tobacco. When the First World War broke out, he became an Intelligence officer for the Nyasaland Frontier Force, and was eventually wounded and transferred to Roberts Heights, a hospital in South Africa. He had come from a scholarly family—his father, who held the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Queen's University, had spoken Latin, Greek, or Hebrew with him on their Sunday walks—and some years before the war, being lonely for intellectual exchange, had advertised in the *Cape Times* for a pen friend "interested in philately and philosophy" and had received a reply signed "A.C.G." During his convalescence, he wrote to his friend saying, "My dear chap, I'll come over and meet you," and they arranged to meet in Pietermaritzburg.

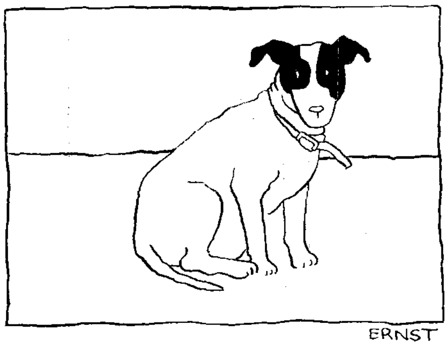
"I'm not sure at what stage A.C.G. told him that she was a woman—whether he knew before he got off the train," Miss Park said. "Anyway, she met him, and she brought along her daughter—my mother—who was very beautiful. My father fell in love with the daughter at first sight, and they were married six months later." John Park was forty-four, and his bride, Doreen Gwynneth Cresswell-George, only nineteen. Her father had come to South Africa from Britain in order to seek his fortune, the family's money having been squandered by his stepfather, who had a fondness for playing the horses.

The couple left the tobacco plantation to go to England for the birth of their first child, and Daphne Park was born in Surrey, on September 1, 1921. Before leaving Africa, her father had made arrangements with his partner, a defrocked Portuguese priest whom everyone had warned him against, to see to the drying, insurance, and shipment of his bumper tobacco crop. The tobacco arrived at its destination musty, totally ruined, and uninsured. Park returned to discover that the partner had made off with everything he could from the plantation. After debts had been paid, nothing remained to Park except his rifle. Nevertheless, his young wife and their six-month-old baby left England to join him.

"We arrived in Beira, on the Mozambique coast," Miss Park said. "They had just built the railway to the Zambezi River. We got on the train, but there was a flood, and part of the track had washed away. It was a fairly adventurous journey. We had to cross the Zambezi, in flood, in a little boat, because the paddle steamer wasn't working, or perhaps it had sunk—I have pictures somewhere, and you can just see the tips of the trees above the water. We then got into a lorry and drove for three days."

Shortly after their arrival, John Park walked on to Tanganyika. "He had been hired by a group of men to go and prospect for gold—he was a man of many talents, my father," she continued. "It was thought that there was gold in the Lupa River, so he went off prospecting, and, indeed, he found alluvial gold. So he sent for my mother and me, and we took a boat that went up Lake Nyasa. When we got to the landing place, at Mwaya, my father wasn't there—he'd miscalculated the date of our arrival. We camped for two days on the shore, where I was an object of some interest, as I was the first white child ever seen there." The reunited family then set out for the Lupa, Doreen Park travelling part of the way in a *machila*, or hammock swung on a pole, and Daphne on people's shoulders. "We walked for about ten days, I think, through very wild country, some of it quite beautiful. The Lupa ran through lion country—lots of lions, lots of prickly bushes, and very dry, very little water. My parents built a mud hut, and we lived in it until I was about three. My father made enough from panning for gold for us to survive, and my mother planted a garden."

Doreen Park discovered that she was pregnant again, and undertook the long trek back to England. She bore a small, delicate boy, and returned with him to her family in Africa. The Parks realized that living in such conditions was not going to be good for the children, and so decided that while John would continue to pan for gold his wife would move to the highlands and grow coffee.



"They rented land at Kayuki, which means 'the place of bees,' and my mother ran the coffee plantation and grew *arabica* and *robusta*. She sent food for my father's laborers—a four-day trip—and my father sent her the gold. It was an astonishingly honest world in those days, and the gold was generally sent by runner. My father would walk to the farm once every three or four months and stay for several days; otherwise, my mother and brother and I lived entirely alone."

The house on the coffee plantation was built of mud brick, with a roof of thatch and corrugated iron, and it acquired, over the years, a Rubberoid floor and a porcelain bathtub with taps but no running water. Doreen Park again grew her garden. Planters, gold panners, and settlers, of course, had no regular home leave, as did those in government service. Daphne's mother did not return to England until 1946, twenty-one years later.

"For her, Africa was exile. I am filled with admiration for my mother. She was nearly blind, you see; at the age of eighteen, she suddenly became unable to see out of the center of her eyes. She had good peripheral vision, but she couldn't read. When I was very young, she taught me to read aloud to her. Her family in England used to send books out to us, and I began very early a lifelong habit of reading everything I could get my hands on, from translations of Homer to 'Huckleberry Finn.' "

The family's self-contained life—they were ten miles, or a good day's walk, from their nearest European neighbors—affected Daphne most markedly in two ways: she was able to indulge a precocious appetite for books (at times I felt her memory of those years was less of a childhood proper than of an extended reading period), and she came to rely almost entirely on her own resources, a habit that proved difficult to break. When she eventually attended school in England, she had, for the first four years, no friends among her peers. "I was reading one of those books about girls at boarding school," she recalled, "and I suddenly realized that I didn't have any friends like that, and perhaps I ought." In what may have been her first diplomatic move, she set about acquiring some. "I began by making people laugh."

Daphne Park strikes one at first meeting as being personable and approachable—the kind of stranger with whom one could strike up a genuine and comfortable conversation on a long journey. Her enjoyment of people is incontestably a paramount trait in her personality, and yet it is not difficult to imagine her as the self-sufficient, busily engaged young girl oblivious of the fact that she lacked the usual coterie of "chums." It is tempting to extrapolate from this early self-reliance to her years on the move in the Foreign Office. One of the most inconvenient conditions of living abroad in different places is the difficulty of establishing a network of lifelong friends. The fact that Daphne Park seems to have been able to face each new posting with gusto is, in this respect, enlightening. While she speaks warmly of old friends with whom she has remained close over the years, and of the excitement of "setting off the sparks" of new relationships, it is clear that this is a woman who in times of difficulty instinctively turns inward, toward her own deep resources.

Her voracious reading as a child was supplemented by a correspondence course conducted by the Bishop of Tanganyika's daughter for children who were living in the wilds. Each lesson took about ten days to arrive, being sent by lorry, train, and finally runner; sometimes the books were damp, if the runner had fallen into a river on the way. "It was wonderful. I read lots of history, lots of English literature. I loved classics, but mathematics was a disaster. The teaching was very good, too—lots of comments. And then there came a day when the correspondence people wrote to my mother and said, 'You've got to send this child to school.' I was almost eleven. So my mother and father conferred, and it was arranged that I would go to England with some friends of theirs. I remember a lorry ride through a cloud of locusts—locusts in your ears, your eyes, your mouth. In Dar es Salaam, I switched on my first electric light and pulled my first loo chain. I wasn't to go back to Africa for years and years. There was no money for me to go back, or for my parents to come to me. My mother's mother and my two great-aunts became my guardians.

"Africa left very little *immediate* impression on me. Curiously, the first time that my memories of Africa came to me with real intensity was much later, when I was studying Russian at Cambridge. I had been asked to write an essay on my childhood. It was my first Russian essay, and I had to look up every single word and grammatical construction. Consequently, I wrote with more concentration than I have probably ever written in my life. I found that what I wanted to describe was what I had almost forgotten I had ever been aware of—night sounds, like frogs, crickets, drums; the fingering of the sun when it was really hot; the sound of rain on corrugated-iron roofs. I suddenly realized that it was all there somewhere, at the back of my consciousness. When I eventually went back to Africa, I accepted a lot of things that other people found frightening. It didn't occur to me to worry about living alone there, for example—it wasn't a place where I was ever frightened. I loved Africa. But I can also remember periods of intense frustration and boredom, because there was no one to talk to. My mother was a wonderful person, but she wasn't very intellectual. My brother, David, was four years younger, and often ill—he died when he was fourteen. My father was usually away. I grew up solitary. I wanted to ask questions, I wanted to sharpen my mind. When I first came to England, the thing I most loved was having my mind sharpened with lots of new arguments and ideas. I loved school. I loved the whole experience of being there."

DAPHNE PARK had the rare good fortune to grow up in a world in which the obstacles that might have confronted someone both poor and female were absent. In Africa, there had been no worry about keeping up with the Joneses; financial and social comparisons were essentially meaningless in that frontier world. She therefore entered upon English life with little consciousness of the implications of her family's poverty. "No one in the family ever made me feel that money was a problem," she said. "We certainly

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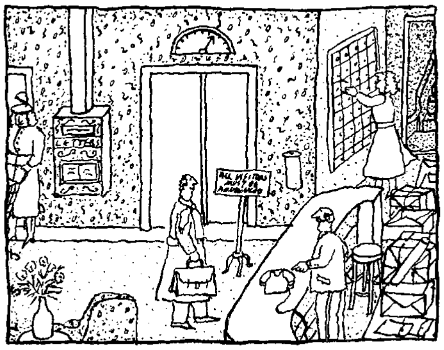
never felt that it would limit us in any way, and I never thought that poverty was demeaning. I wore secondhand clothes all through Oxford. I was *aware* of what having no money meant, but I never thought I would be stopped from doing whatever I wanted to do because of it."

Nor at Oxford was she conscious of any particular significance attached to being a woman—not what one would have expected, given the history of women's studies there. The university was founded late in the twelfth century, but classes for women were not instituted until 1873 (although wives and sisters of university professors were permitted to attend lectures beginning in 1866). In 1896, a motion to open the B.A. course to women was defeated by the University Congregation, and not until 1920 did women receive full privileges. Miss Park matriculated in 1940, nineteen years before the university repealed the "women's statutes" and the five women's societies then in existence were recognized as colleges.

"I had gone to a very good state girls' school—the Rosa Bassett School, in South London, where we all really thought we could conquer the world," she explained. "It never occurred to us that we couldn't do what we wanted with our lives—that we couldn't go where we wanted in the world. I went up to Oxford very self-confident. Bear in mind, too, that we were at the beginning of a war. The very month that I went up, the docks were set ablaze and the Battle of Britain took place—one was thinking about something much, much bigger than oneself. People one knew were getting killed. There was a great danger threatening the country. I don't think we ever feared that Britain would actually be invaded, but we well knew that life was dangerous, and the idea removed quite a lot of one's normal preoccupations. The war had a marked effect on our generation—it gave us a sense of perspective. And women were playing a considerable part in the war. They were going into the services, they were ferrying aircraft, they were in the factories and the ambulance service. Women were doing things with men, side by side. I don't think that at that time there was any particular need, as a woman, to prove yourself. I was aware, however, that there were some things I was able to do at Oxford because so many of the men weren't there. For instance, I became the president of the Liberal Club. I believe I was one of the first women to be the president of a university political society, and I think, realistically speaking, that if the normal number of young men had been there my chances would have been greatly reduced."

In those days, Somerville took only forty-five students a year. Daphne had been awarded two scholarships: a state scholarship of a hundred and fifty pounds ("a tremendous amount of money then") and a scholarship from the London County Council, which was dependent on residency. Her grandmother, ignorant of the niceties of the educational system, moved the family out of London to Surrey just six weeks before Daphne was due to go up to Oxford, thus rendering her ineligible for the county scholarship. The amount, seventy-five pounds, was the difference between going and not going. The Surrey County Council was approached, and offered to make a loan of the money, on the condition that Daphne promise to teach in Surrey for five years after she obtained her degree, thereby repaying the loan by public service. "I said, 'But I'm not going to teach.' I was a real St. Trinian's child, with pigtails, headlamp spectacles, gym slip, and black ribbed stockings, and was invariably covered in ink. They said, 'Hoity-toity! And why not? It's a very good profession.' I told them that I knew it was, because I had been wonderfully taught by very good teachers, but that I had no vocation for it. I didn't have the slightest desire to teach anyone. So then they asked me what else I could possibly do, and I told them I was going to be a diplomat. They told me there weren't any women diplomats—in fact, they were wrong, but neither of us knew it then—and I replied that by the time I left Oxford there would be."

The council sent her away while it reconsidered, and summoned her ten days later. "They told me they had decided not to give me the loan. I leapt to my feet and said, 'Couldn't you have told me sooner, if you were going to say no?' They told me to sit down, and said, 'You're not going to be a very good diplomat if you don't wait until the end of other people's sentences. We've discussed it, and *if* by some chance you are right and there *are* going to be women diplomats we suppose that is a public service. But we have made some inquiries and discovered that the diplomatic service is poorly paid and therefore you would never be able to repay a loan, so we have created a special scholarship for you.'"


LETTERS
ALL VISITORS MUST BE ANNOUNCED

Daphne Park characterizes herself as "an essentially political animal." What had prompted her, I asked, to seek a career in diplomacy rather than in domestic politics?

"I preferred being a public servant," she replied. "I've just been rereading Dean Acheson's 'Present at the Creation,' in which he speaks of public life as fulfilling the Aristotelian ideal of happiness: 'the exercise of vital powers along lines of excellence, in a life affording them scope.' Being a good public servant is a challenging and deeply satisfying thing. And all my life I've been deeply interested in international politics rather than in party politics. I was a Liberal at Oxford, but basically my instinct is to serve what I regard as the bipartisan needs of my country." The Rosa Bassett School was again invoked: "It was intensely political. People like the great social reformer Eleanor Rathbone used to come and talk to us. Our headmistress was very socially active, and the school was always full of refugees. When the Spanish War happened, there were Basque children, whom she adopted, and when things got really bad in Germany we had several Jewish refugees, most of whom never saw their parents again. We were very much aware of what was happening in the world. I am an internationalist because of that school.

"I read French at Oxford—I think really because in the summer of 1939 the London County Council gave me a fifty-pound scholarship to go to France for three months, where I lived with a family in a little town about ten miles outside Paris. I had a blissful time, and that obviously influenced me. And, of course, I felt that for diplomatic service I would need another language."

Oxford undergraduate programs are generally three years long, and in 1943 Miss Park took her degree. "At the end of Oxford, everyone went into uniform of some sort, and in my final year the civil-service commission came and interviewed all of us. We were very much encouraged—on the whole, *expected*, if we were bright and politically aware—to accept the appointment offered. I was offered two positions, one in the Foreign Office and the other in the Treasury—the two top things one could do—but by that time I was firmly convinced that the war needed me to win it. I had some idea that I was going to"—she laughed, and put a hand up to her face—"I don't know what exactly, but I was quite sure it would be something directly related to winning the war. I could be a civil servant later, but I was *not* going to go to Whitehall and push pieces of paper around."

The next wave of recruiting officers came from the various women's services in the Army and the Navy. "I was told that I would do interesting things, like being an education officer and teaching courses in current affairs," she remarked with heavy scorn, her hands now folded again in her lap. "I rejected that, and nothing much remained but being called up into industry." A chance meeting with a former Somervillean who was also a linguist gave her a new idea of the direction she might take. Her friend had joined FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry), a women's corps that had been founded during the Boer War as a nursing unit, but had come to play a variety of roles within the regular services. "My friend said that she was doing something intensely dull in Whitehall, but she looked so smug about how dull it was that I suspected that it was very interesting."

She and two friends went to the FANY headquarters in London, where they were greeted with a complete lack of interest and barely succeeded in obtaining an interview. Ultimately, Daphne's family background in East Africa, where FANY was active, distinguished her from the other applicants, and she was told to report to a certain country house.

For two weeks, the chosen applicants were marched and drilled and given various tests to determine their potential as wireless operators and codists. At the end of the training, a final examination was administered. "There were two parts, a practical examination, consisting of things to be coded, and a question: 'Explain why codes are used in time of war.' The answer was obviously 'So as to communicate without the enemy knowing what you are saying.' But I was straight from Oxford, and I thought, *What* a very interesting question. I started with it, and wrote a long and thoughtful essay, beginning with Pythagoras, on the history of coding. I looked up later and discovered, to my horror, that I had something like ten minutes left for the really important part. When the results of the examination were made public, I was called before the examiners and told, '17838, Volunteer Park. We are sorry to say that you are the first person who has managed to fail this exam. We don't quite know what to do with you.' "

She was sent to FANY's headquarters, in London, to work as a mess orderly while her fate was being decided. A disastrous accident involving the service lift, in the middle of a formal dinner in honor of a war hero, insured her quick dismissal from that job, but her superiors told her, with some puzzlement, that she had been asked to report to the Special Operations unit. "It turned out that someone—as a great joke—had sent my exam paper to the very man who had invented many of the codes, and he wanted to meet me," she explained. They did meet, and he put her on his staff. "After that," she said, with an air of smugness no doubt similar to that exhibited by her linguist friend, "I had a very interesting war."

"Oh. I have someone for you to marry."

• •

THIS is a shadowy period in Miss Park's life—a period necessarily still shrouded in wartime secrecy. "Ah, I'm not so sure I would wish to say anything about that," she said on several occasions, by way of answer to a question I had asked. "But I can say . . ."

Yes?

"That I met some *very* interesting people."

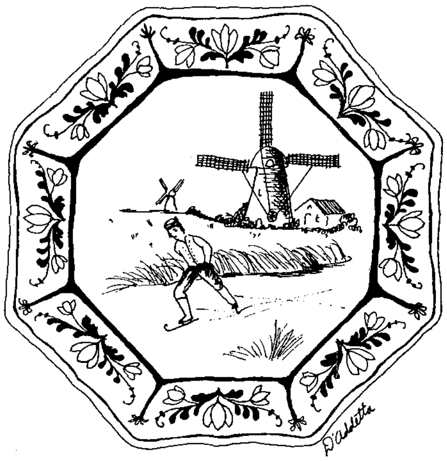
Among the assignments that can be mentioned was her service as a briefing and dispatching officer in the Special Operations Executive in North Africa, which helped support the resistance movement in Europe. At the end of the war, still a FANY officer, she was sent to Vienna and Berlin to try to get in touch with Axis scientists and technicians in order to ascertain the kind of research they had been involved in during the war years. This job profoundly influenced the course of her service in the Foreign Office, which she entered in 1948.

"Many of the scientists were being kidnapped by the Russians," she said. "It was this that made me want to learn Russian and serve in the Soviet Union, and see what it was really like there. I went into the Foreign Office at the time of the Berlin airlift. I saw the threat to our world returning—not from the Germans this time but from the Russians. I watched them swallow up Czechs, Poles—people I had known. I wanted to meet and understand the people who lived under such a regime. To be a diplomat without knowing the enemy—no, everything else was peripheral."

In 1951, she began her study of the Russian language at Cambridge University. It was an intensive fifteen-month course, taken mostly by people in the services, and supplemented by a period of residence with émigré Russian families in France. After this period of concentrated work, the Foreign Office, in its peculiar wisdom, sent her to Paris for two years as a member of the United Kingdom's delegation to NATO, "where, of course, I forgot my Russian." In 1954, however, she was at last sent to Moscow, and she served there for the next two years, as a Second Secretary in the Embassy's Secretariat. The Secretariat was responsible for reporting on all aspects of internal Soviet life, including what was being said in the Soviet press. Like all Russian speakers in the Embassy, she was encouraged to travel as widely and as often as she could, in order to become familiar with the people and the country.

"In Moscow, you knew that if people you met pursued the relationship, ten times out of ten it was because they had been told to do so. The beauty of travel was that one could meet people who had not lived directly under the shadow of Stalin, as all those in Moscow had, and were not so wary. Moreover, while you were travelling on trains there were no neighbors to report on the Soviet citizens who talked to you. Of course, there were also the plants—people who turned up again in your life in Moscow—but it was nonetheless possible to meet perfectly genuine people. I remember a particularly delightful beekeeper from the Ukraine.

"1956 was, of course, the year of the Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolt. A very interesting period. Tanks came into the streets of Budapest, and the West had to look on, because it wasn't prepared to fight. Then we perpetrated Suez, which took the heat off the Russians in the eyes of the world and put it on us. In the second week of Suez—I believe it was—when Britain was being heavily attacked in the United Nations, I witnessed the first so-called spontaneous demonstration at the Embassy, which was just across the way from the Kremlin. That morning, the Soviet militia, who were supposed to guard us, opened the Embassy gates and let in the spontaneous demonstrators, who swarmed into the outer buildings and broke windows and went up onto the roof and had a good go at the aerials; they were very well organized, and each had a different job to do. Some were spitting in through the ground-floor windows of the Secretariat, which I objected to. I was trying to read my newspaper and ignore them, when I suddenly thought, Why, I've got a captive audience! We used to get every day from the Joint Press Reading Service a summary of what the world's papers were saying—the BBC was, of course, heavily jammed. I collected the last four days' worth of news, in which there was a great deal written about Hungary. I went to the window and asked 'Do you want to know what's happening in Hungary?' and began rapidly translating. Many were young student types, and they desperately wanted to hear, so they stopped shouting and formed a semicircle around the window to listen, until they were moved on by the organizers. At the end of the morning, the Ambassador sent a military attaché and a naval attaché in full uniform out to an M.V.D. general who was standing in the courtyard observing everything with great approval. Our officers saluted him and said, 'The Ambassador would be obliged to know when this demonstration will end, as he is having guests for luncheon.' The general looked at his watch and said, 'This spontaneous demonstration of the people's wroth will end at a quarter to one precisely.' And it did.



"I abhor Communism. It is a wicked, evil regime. It rests on terror. I remember a conversation I had in Vietnam with a deputy of the National Liberation Front. 'Why,' I asked him, 'is it necessary for you to kill village leaders in the South and expose people in the marketplace, if you have such a deep sphere of influence there, as you claim?' He looked at me and replied, 'I had understood that you served in Moscow and studied Communism. You must know that Lenin said that terror is an instrument of government.' Nothing makes me angrier than people who can't respect human dignity. Somewhere, a long way back in my childhood, I learned that the most important thing is to respect the dignity of others. The only time I can remember being beaten as a child—and beaten severely—was when my father caught me being rude to an African man. I hate people who humiliate, who diminish the human race. I hate Communism for the same reason that I abominate apartheid: I find it terribly hard to believe that there are people who don't care about children in jail, about Stephen Biko beaten to death.

"I will give you one example that is illustrative of what I hated about the Soviet regime—I could give many. I had a servant in my Moscow flat, a Party member, very good at changing microphones in the flat, not quite so good at everything else. One day, when she was in a very bad mood, I walked with her to the market. I often asked her questions in the course of these walks, when we were away from the bugging. Sometimes she answered, sometimes she did not, but it was always worth trying. I asked her why she was so cross that morning, and she said that a woman who had been released early from a labor camp had come to live with her, in her very overcrowded apartment, where several families shared the kitchen. One more person was too many. I asked what this woman had done to be sent to a camp in the first place. She replied that the woman had been heard grumbling in a queue, and had, of course, been denounced and received a ten-year sentence. ‘Why “of course”?’ I asked her. She stopped short in the street, and said, ‘You don’t understand, do you? Every person in that queue had to decide if the grumbling woman was a *provocateur;* if so, everyone had to report her. If she wasn’t, then she was a fool—she knew we would have to do it. Better to denounce than go to camp.’ This situation is the root of all evil.

“There is a dichotomy one always perceives in Communist countries. I left the Soviet Union with a heightened sense that there is evil in the world, and yet there is also astonishing and glorious nobility. Courage is the antidote to evil. I admire courage more than any other human attribute—I include moral courage and integrity. If people have courage, I forgive them a lot of other things. The bravest people are those in the labor camps, who have no guarantee that anyone will know how they behave and yet still manage to care about each other.”

Her admiration of the quiet heroism of camp inmates requires no explanation. Her second-rank heroes—or, in this case, heroines—are more unexpected. “Governesses and maiden aunts—they are utterly dependent on their own resources, and survive by heroic fortitude. Often, they are the mainstay of their families, and yet they are held in such low regard. My favorite great-aunt was one such courageous person. She had absolutely no life of her own. Her engagement was broken, and she ended up looking after her sister’s children. She was desperately shy and desperately proud, and yet her only way of supporting herself was to be a companion—something for which she had neither aptitude nor training. She lived a life of total obscurity, but she had a spark of pride; she was uncrushed by poverty.”

Miss Park’s reverence for the lives of quiet desperation is, one feels, strongly tinged with a sense of guilt arising from a retrospective appreciation that while she was making her plans to conquer the world, those to whom she owed so much of her character and opportunities remained behind in the shadows. The sense of guilt is most apparent whenever her mother—alone, partly blind, exiled from the country she loved—is mentioned.

“For many years, I resented my mother,” she said, her voice dropping from its characteristic even pitch. “That is a black spot on my life. I wrote to her dutifully until I was eighteen, but she became more and more unreal. I didn’t know anymore who it was that I was communicating with. I didn’t see her again until she visited England in 1946. I had come to love my guardians more than I loved her, and she was deeply wounded by this. I resented her not understanding my love for them. My mother was a bit like a hen with a duckling—she didn’t really understand what I’d turned into. She wanted me to have security and someone to look after me, and she had hoped that I would be a gay, flirtatious creature. I could not have been more disappointing. She ended up proud of me, but mystified. I realized years later that, while I had almost romantically admired my father, I had always thought of my mother as a loving but limited person—I had not thought of her as a person of moral stature. It was not until quite late in my life that I saw that my getting to England was her doing. My father had thought it would be nice for me to go, but he didn’t actually *do* anything. My mother had remorselessly saved every penny and, I imagine, went through all sorts of little stratagems, such as selling her jewelry, to make sure that I got to England. It took me years and years to see that she was the bedrock of the family. Anyone who ran a coffee plantation entirely on her own in the middle of Africa while caring for two small children and nursing a sick husband—my father had come to suffer from blackwater fever—had to have something. But I took it totally for granted. My father was this romantic figure who had walked through Africa, but she was the heroic figure.”

IN 1952, Daphne Park’s father and mother returned to England for good. Her father had by that time discovered mica deposits not far from where he had been prospecting for gold, and he was able to buy a house in London for the extended family. Three months later, he died, and by 1959 the family had been reduced to Daphne and her mother. In that year, Daphne received her third foreign

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posting, as British Consul in Léopoldville.

"The Belgians had been talking about independence for the Congo—they knew it was inevitable, but they were not really sure when it would happen," she recalled. "They were talking about thirty years hence, then five years hence. The Belgian colonial presence was very unenlightened. The *flamands* were like the Afrikaners—ill-educated, many of them bottom of the heap at home. They were not interested in anything around them; they were there for the better standard of living and nothing else. The Belgians teaching in the remote parts of the country, who were able to speak one or more of the thirty-seven tribal languages, usually got on well with the Africans. In Léopoldville, it was much less attractive. The *flamands* were frightened; they were not quite clear about what they were afraid of, but they kept big Doberman pinschers, put grenades under their beds, and had bright lights in their gardens. By law, servants were sent home at night—for fear they'd cut their masters' throats while they slept, I suppose. I did not want to live in the European quarter. I couldn't see myself making any African friends if they had to pass everyone's Dobermans to reach me. A house was found for me on the airport road, near the Cité Africaine. It was very hot. The houses in the European quarter were up on a little hill, which at sea level makes a lot of difference.

"It looked as if independence might happen rather sooner than thirty years hence, so our consulate general was instructed to get to know the new African parties and their leaders, if they could be identified, and tell the Foreign Office what they represented. This was not easy. From the Belgian point of view, any gathering of three or more Africans presented a threat, and people were not forthcoming. It was difficult to meet Africans, because the Belgians had no machinery for whites to meet with blacks. They had, however, just started to appoint African mayors for the arrondissements into which Léopoldville was divided, and when the governor-general wanted to give a party to which Africans were invited he called on them. The only other Africans one could readily meet were the undergraduates at the university. It was not a very representative group; there were twelve graduates, I think, in 1960. My instincts about my house proved to be correct: because it was situated between the African quarter and the town, I had many African visitors daily. As a consequence, I was struck off the governor-general's invitation list—which I didn't mind. I was far more interested in talking to Africans than to the often dull *flamands*. I had a few non-Belgian European friends, and I made good friends with some young American academics, but most of my friends were black. My having been brought up in Africa must have helped. Also, I was interesting to many of the African nationalists, because I travelled up and down the coast a lot—to Ghana, Nigeria, and French West Africa. When I first arrived, I used to go to fetch the Embassy mail from Accra. Most people liked to do it once or twice but then got bored, whereas I didn't mind. One had to cross the river to Brazzaville, then fly to Douala, often getting stuck in Gabon en route. One would get as far as Lagos, then get stuck again before reaching Accra. It could take three days. I was meeting and talking with people all the way, so I knew what was in the air."

Slowly, her political contacts built up. Future ministers stopped by her house on the airport road as they commuted to and from Léopoldville, and the evening conversations on her veranda were pursued until the early hours of the morning. She met Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the Mouvement National Congolais, by chance in the British consulate when he was standing in a queue for a visa to go to Ghana. Her introduction to other members of the M.N.C. Central Committee was more unorthodox: Before setting out on an official trip to Stanleyville, she asked Lumumba to advise her on how to get in touch with M.N.C. members, many of whom were based in Stanleyville. Lumumba gave her the name of a certain Monsieur Barlovatz, and told her to look him up when she arrived.

"So I met M. Barlovatz and introduced myself and told him what I wanted, and he said yes, he could arrange for me to meet the committee members. But in the meantime would I like to go on a little fishing trip? I said I would like that very much. The fishing, it seems, was best at night. We set out in a canoe, in the dark, and we shot the rapids, and we caught lots of fish, and then we pulled over to a cove where some other fishermen had built a fire and were cooking their dinner on the coals. And, fortunately, I had brought along a bottle of whiskey, and we had a very sociable evening. Finally, we left, and returned to Stanleyville just as it was getting light. And I thanked M. Barlovatz for an enjoyable trip, and I said, 'Now, remember. You have promised to arrange for me to meet the members of the M.N.C.' And he said, 'Mademoiselle, you just did.' "

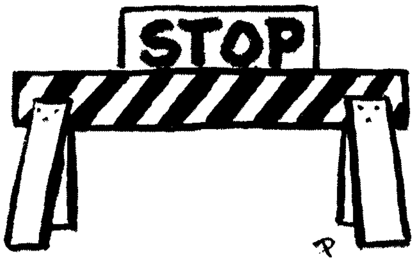
On June 30, 1960, independence was declared. Lumumba became the Prime Minister in the new government, which was headed by President Joseph Kasavubu. Less than a week later, there was a mutiny of the Force Publique, which was both the national Army and the gendarmerie. Shortly afterward, the troops of the Thysville garrison, just south of Léopoldville, seized the poorly guarded munitions stores and roughed up some of their European officers. Overnight, some six thousand Belgians fled the country.

"It was so wasteful and sad. The Belgians were deeply afraid that now, at last, scores would be settled. In fact, very few scores *were* settled, and in Léopoldville almost nothing really happened. We were roughly treated, but nothing *happened*. After the mutiny and the troubles, I got a curfew pass from Lumumba's office and could go back and forth, but, unfortunately, very few people had these passes, and so very few people could visit *me*. Everyone around me had left; many of them had been bullying little *flamands*, who had probably shouted at their servants a lot and called them monkeys, which the servants didn't like, curiously. I lived alone, and I didn't have a gun or a dog. I did occasionally get a mild frisson as I walked into the house—I wasn't totally foolish—but I daresay I would have got that living alone anywhere."

The mutiny and the intertribal fighting that it unleashed rendered the political situation beyond the power of the novice government, and in mid-July, at Lumumba's request, United Nations forces were brought in to try to stabilize the situation. Katanga, the wealthiest of the Congo's provinces, had seceded from the new republic and was being ruled by a maverick government headed by Moise Tshombe. Lumumba eventually fell into the hands of his enemies in Katanga and was murdered, the U.N. troops having allowed his capture and transportation.

"The United Nations force had very curious ground rules concerning nonintervention, which caused me to become disillusioned with the United Nations forever," Miss Park continued. "Lumumba himself, while at the height of his power, had been beating people up, kidnapping them in public, setting his thugs on people—all under the noses of the U.N. The most scandalous thing that I was personally involved in took place up in Stanleyville, Lumumba's fief. After Lumumba's arrest, his Deputy Prime Minister, Antoine Gizenga, proclaimed himself in charge and set up headquarters in Stanleyville. The place was in turmoil, and it wasn't much fun being a European there. I flew up to Stanleyville on some fairly routine consular work, and, unknown to me, and unknown to anybody, Bernard Salumu, one of the higher-placed Gizengists, had put out a decree that—typically for the Congo—was dated, let's say, on a Saturday and didn't appear in the press until Tuesday. It said that any foreigners not provided with new identity papers approved by the regime by Saturday night at midnight would be arrested. And, of course, the deadline had already passed, and on the morning I arrived the troops had gone around arresting everybody, dragging them out in their nightclothes in some cases. When I got to the Stanleyville airport, we were all beaten and made to squat in the sun with our hands over our heads for some time, and we were searched and maltreated generally. The French consul's wife found me while I was waiting to be released—she had come to warn me not to go into town. But I said, 'Well, as I'm here, I *shall* go into town—it's my job.' In town, her husband and the British honorary vice-consul were queuing for their documents outside Salumu's office, and I joined them in the queue.

"We waited and we waited—mothers with their children, people half dressed—in the sun for the entire day. The U.N. force did nothing to prevent this or to prevent Gizenga's troops from occasionally beating up people in line—the troops were fairly drunk. They didn't like leather shoes, or belts, or spectacles, for some reason. If you had those, you hid them. Finally, it was my turn to enter the office. Now, Salumu was someone I had often entertained at my house. To do him justice, he leapt from his chair when he saw me and said, 'Oh, Mademoiselle, why did you have to come today?' There was a small room behind him which I knew to be stuffed with people who hadn't been given food or water, and which had no ventilation, and I asked him if there were any British subjects in that room and said that if so I wanted to see them and have them let out. He said that he couldn't let anyone out, and gave me a great speech about evil colonialists, and so forth, and he swore to me—truthfully, it turned out—that there were no British subjects in there. He gave me my document, and told me I had to be out of town within two days. Once I was outside, the Greek procurator-general rushed up to me and said that a British subject had been arrested and was being held in the main jail, where everyone was in a pretty bad way. I asked him to drop me off near the jail, and to notify the British authorities in Léopoldville if I did not return within six hours. When we got to the jail, I walked in and said I wanted to see the British subject, whose name I had been given—it wasn't a very British name, but British subjects come in all different colors and sizes. The guard tried to send me away, but I sat down and said I would wait until I could talk to someone in authority. And the guard, foolishly, rushed away—to find somebody bigger and stronger to throw me out, I suppose. Usually, you could be absolutely sure that there would be a lot of armed troops standing around and getting in the way, but I suppose they were all having their tea or joining in the fun outside, because the moment he went away I saw that no one was around, and so I walked through a door in his office and found myself in a central courtyard. It was a fairly horrible sight. There were a great many people, black and white, with bloody heads and broken limbs. I asked if there were any British subjects there, and finally I found the chap, and unfortunately—in a way—he turned out to be a Belgian airline pilot who had flown with the R.A.F. during the war and had been entitled to become a British subject at the time, but hadn't done so. But he had now decided that being British might be a good thing under the circumstances, as Belgians were very much the public enemy."



The prisoners begged Miss Park to notify outside authorities about other people who were being detained. Back at the prison entrance, she was threatened with arrest, but made the counterthreat of going to Salumu, whom she now claimed as a close friend. The Greek procurator-general had loyally waited for her, and when she left the prison they went together to the U.N. headquarters, where they were told that they could not interfere with internal politics. Only when she threatened to speak to the world press did the U.N. agree to send a representative to the prison to investigate.

"They sent a commission of inquiry the next day, and I went along as the interpreter, because, typically, none of the U.N. people spoke any French," she said. "The prisoners had meanwhile been cleaned up considerably, because it had been thought that the press might be there. Some sort of solution was worked out, whereby the Belgian prisoners who were prepared to leave the country then and there were to be allowed to go in the U.N. airplane to Léopoldville. That was the theory. I will never know how many actually went."

It was for her service in the Congo and her protection of British subjects in this time of danger that Miss Park was awarded the O.B.E. "I do not have courage, but I do have a mixture of curiosity and optimism," she said of her activities at this time. "I have always felt that if I could talk to the people involved, and be allowed to treat them as rational human beings, I would be all right. Also, I had come to know so many really brave people during the war that I had a model of a certain standard of behavior. I was also often trying to protect or negotiate for someone else—and that makes a difference."

Daphne Park's subsequent overseas posting was also in Africa: from 1964 until 1967, she was the First Secretary in the British High Commission in

Lusaka, Zambia. The last years of her posting covered Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence ("a very interesting time—but not as interesting as the Congo, in African terms"). Her African postings, in spite of the tumultuous events they encompassed, are recalled with great affection, and it is largely as an Africanist that she is known within the diplomatic world.

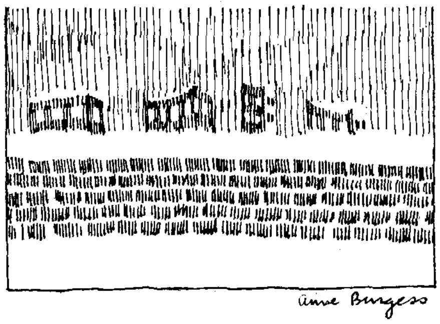
Was she disillusioned, I asked, with the political troubles that have plagued independent Africa?

"No, I am not," she replied. "You cannot expect these countries to become technologically competent and highly sophisticated modern nations overnight; there has got to be a period of growing up. Many of the newly independent countries had no infrastructure, and they were left with the impression—for good or ill, by good advisers and bad—that you really weren't a modern nation unless you had a new stadium or airport or Inter-Continental hotel. They were all encouraged to spend money on industrialization and sophisticated trappings, and most of them were discouraged from spending money on the economy—on the problems of staying alive and having enough to eat. I do not despair, because I think that they are a people who have produced, in an astonishingly short time, individuals capable of leading countries. One has to remember that it took us all of eight hundred years to evolve a parliamentary system, and a system of checks and balances, and the possibility of having an alternative government. In the African countries, it is still as it probably was in the time of Simon de Montfort or the robber barons, when if you were foolish enough to consult somebody and say, 'I'd like to know if you agree with me or not,' you were thought weak and would have your head chopped off instantly. Several African leaders, from Lumumba on, have explained to me that it's nonsense to expect a parliamentary system in an African state, because any African looking on will say that the reason you are tolerating people who criticize you is that you are not strong enough to slap them down. On the other hand, I don't think there is anything to be gained by blaming European colonizers for passing on what they thought in good faith was the best system they knew. I don't think one can really expect them to have said, 'My dear chap, this is not for you. You had better have a dictator or two, and chop heads off the village chiefs, and have witch doctors, because that's the way you have always done it.' They had to produce a model and say, 'Here's how we do it.' And some of the countries have succeeded in adapting the model relatively well."

If the Congo was the most eventful of the postings in Daphne Park's diplomatic career, the most trying was surely her designation as consul-general in Hanoi, from September of 1969 to December of 1970. It was, as she characterizes it, "a curious situation," in that Britain, like France, although it maintained a presence in Hanoi, did not recognize North Vietnam. This anomalous state of affairs resulted in part from the failed Geneva talks in the early fifties, when the French and British had decided to stay on in anticipation of free elections that in fact never materialized.

"The British bothered to be in Hanoi at all because it was desirable to have people there through whom messages could be sent. The Soviet Ambassador, for example, thought it worthwhile to tell me what the Soviet Union thought would happen if the United States did this or that, and I was meant to pass it on." The consequence of the British de-facto role was that the consular mission was treated by the North Vietnamese as the least favored mission, and the members of the mission staff, who numbered only two, were essentially consigned to the position of nonpersons. Measures were taken to insure that they were as isolated as possible.

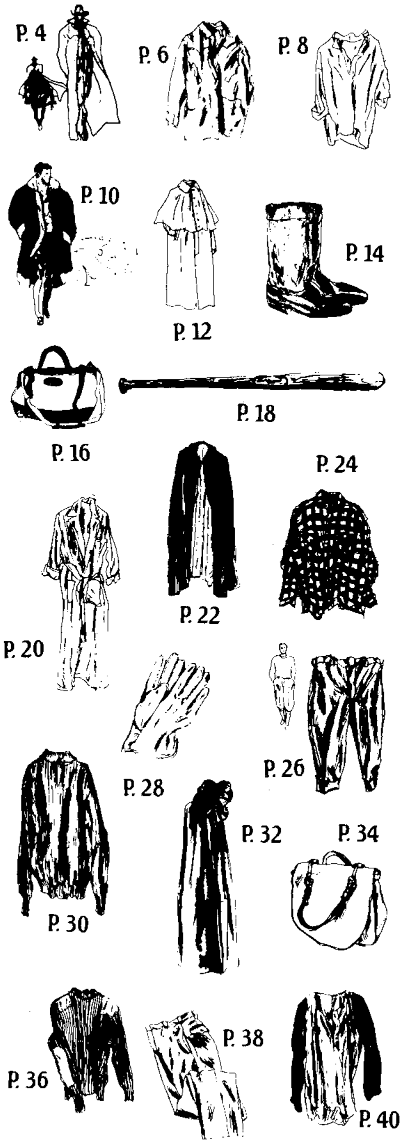
"We weren't allowed to talk to the Vietnamese, except chosen ones, like the head of the police or immigration. We were, however, invited by the other missions to receptions—Polish Military Day, national days, and things like that—to which the Vietnamese Politburo and a certain number of Vietnamese dignitaries were also invited. There one could meet them, but it rather depended on the mood of the day whether or not one could actually talk to them. I used to clink glasses regularly with people like General Giap, who used to say to me, with a wolfish grin, 'Bottoms up.' But it was a long time before any Vietnamese officials had any real conversation with me. We weren't allowed to learn Vietnamese—I had asked for a teacher and wasn't allowed to have one. The only people one could talk to were the members of the diplomatic corps. Our movements were very restricted, and we were given a scanty petrol allowance, so we could not stray far from the mission premises. All the other diplomats were allowed to go for rest and recreation to a place that was 'in the hills'—about fifty feet up. We were not allowed to go there. They were allowed to go to Haiphong. We were not. It was an uncomfortable life, and extremely unhealthy. My house was full of rats. There had been an extermination program, but the rats didn't know about it. Weevils and worms used to come out of the shower. It was the sort of place where one was apt to get typhoid, although I never got anything—I was very healthy. But then I had been brought up by my mama to boil all water three times. The temperature regularly got up to a hundred and ten degrees. There was air-conditioning, but it never worked—and, in any case, electricity was in short supply. You just sweltered.



"Once a month in turn, one of us had to go to Vientiane and fetch our mail, and we would be gone for a week or four days, depending on the cycle of the International Control Commission's airplane, which was an ancient Dakota that used to fly between Hanoi and Vientiane. The Vietnamese would play little games with us, like delaying the exit visa until it was too late to catch the airplane—one of my predecessors had particularly suffered from this tactic. Shortly after I was posted there, I decided I would do something about all this. I put in for my exit visa in the usual way—through our Vietnamese clerk, who had worked for the mission for years and years. He used to go around to the police every afternoon to try to collect the visa—and, of course, to make his daily report on us. Once you have lived in a Communist country, you know that someone has to report on you, and you don't hold it against the person or feel rancorous about it. Every day, he would come back and say that the visa wasn't in yet. In the past, they had been known to deliver it *just* too late for you to get to the aircraft, so the ride to the airport was always hair-raising. The airplane wouldn't wait; it landed and turned around very fast and took off again. This was for very sound reasons: the Pathet Lao were supposed not to fire their missiles for certain periods within the air corridor that the plane used, but either their clocks were wrong or they used to forget, and occasionally it could be a rather dangerous flight. Therefore, the pilot never wasted time on the ground in Hanoi. About three days before I was due to go, I said to our clerk, 'Don't bother with that visa—there's a Polish reception next week that I'd rather like to go to. If the visa comes through, all well and good, but if it doesn't we can put in an application again next month, can't we?' The visa came through the next morning. I had to play little games, too—and after a few times they got the message, and I had no more trouble with my visa. They used to delay to the day, but never to the breakneck point. I don't know if they decided that it wasn't worth it or they were genuinely afraid that I was having a better time in Hanoi than they had suspected.

"One was necessarily aware of the fact that this was a war-torn country. It was a country with very little food, and people were living on the edge of considerable privation. You could see a certain number of wounded about. There was one terrible day—an Easter Sunday. The church was normally kept locked up, and was open only for very special occasions, like Christmas and Easter, when the diplomatic corps, including the infidels and the atheists, attended—I remember that the first time I went the East Germans were sitting in front of me, behaving absolutely disgracefully, laughing and shrieking. But on this particular day the service was being conducted by an ancient and trembling Vietnamese priest, who nevertheless managed to say the benediction in four different languages. In the middle of the service—which was filmed for television, to show what a Christian place Hanoi was, and how Easter was being celebrated there—suddenly there were four or five shaven-headed, pallid people, who were obviously American prisoners who had been let out to celebrate Easter. We weren't allowed near them. We didn't realize until late in the service that they were there. That was awful—to feel that one was so near them and couldn't get through to them at all.

"The regime was narrow and cruel beyond belief to its own people, let alone to prisoners. The Vietnamese themselves, the few that one knew, had admirable endurance and courage. But at the same time they are, I think, a people who are, at least by our standards, ruthless anyway, and they are able to withstand great privation—greater than many of us, I should say. Nevertheless, the North was in a bad way, and it was not at all clear that the end of the war was at hand. The writing might have been on the wall in the South, but it was on the North Vietnamese walls, too. And I have often felt that if the Americans hadn't succumbed to the tremendous pressure at home, and had stayed just two years longer, history might have been different, because the North Vietnamese were finding things very, very hard. I was not at all in sympathy with the American home-front protest, basically because I saw it as a campaign orchestrated by the Russians. I don't deny that there were parents who didn't want their children to die, and also a lot of young people who didn't particularly want to get killed. Nonetheless, I've always found it very hard to accept, because the Vietnam War was one in which the Americans were fighting not for their own financial or material interests but because of an honest belief that the domino effect would follow if the North Vietnamese were allowed to go unchecked. And it *has* followed, to some extent. The writing was on *that* wall right from the beginning. In Party Congresses, the North Vietnamese made it absolutely clear that they never wanted anything less than the whole of Indo-China. The peace parties in Europe and America put it about that the North Vietnamese only wanted the Americans out, and that once this happened there was no reason South Vietnam shouldn't continue on its own path. That was nonsense. The North Vietnamese wanted one Communist Vietnam. This was said I can't tell you how many times, in speeches by Pham Van Dong, Truong Chinh—every-



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body. The West wanted to believe that the two regimes could live side by side, but anyone who knew anything about Communism knew that this was not going to be."

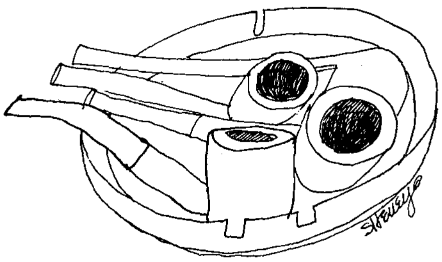
In 1971, Daphne Park was awarded the C.M.G. for her service in Hanoi, and was one of the first women to receive this award for service in the Foreign Office. She was also made an honorary research fellow at the University of Kent, and consequently took a sabbatical leave from the Foreign Office with the intention of writing a thesis on North Vietnam. She got as far as the sixth chapter before being posted, in early 1972, to Ulan Bator, as chargé d'affaires.

"I hadn't *expected* to be called, but it was a place I had always wanted to go," she said, with a laugh. "I was sorry not to be able to finish my work, because at the time the things I had to say about Vietnam would have been considered prescient—now everybody knows. But, between you and me, I do not feel myself to be much of a scholar. I have always preferred to go and *do* something rather than write about it.

"The beauty of the situation in Mongolia was that although the regime was Communist, it was a country with twenty million animals and one million people. If you have got only one million people and you want to spread them over industry and agriculture and education *and* you want to send them abroad to conferences, there aren't many left over that you can put in jail or a camp. You have to be very selective. Therefore, up to a point the Mongols— I wouldn't say they got away with murder, but they could drag their feet quite spectacularly. I remember talking to an unfortunate technical adviser from Hungary, or Rumania, or somewhere, who got rather drunk and told me that he had been there about fifteen years, and had originally been sent in to help the Mongols set up a factory—representatives from the bloc countries were frequently sent in to set up shoe factories or carpet factories, or some such thing. The theory was that they would be there for six months to teach the Mongols how to do the work, and then they would leave, and the Mongols would supply the Eastern-bloc countries with boots, or carpets. But the Mongols didn't see it that way, because in the summer all sensible Mongols spent their time on the steppe riding and making children and drinking koumiss. That's what you did. It was a very short summer, and you didn't waste it on anything but that. The winter was very long and rather cold and uncomfortable, and so you hibernated as much as possible. You stayed at home and kept warm, and probably drank quite a lot, because the food wasn't very remarkable in its variety—mutton, mutton, and mutton. As a result, there were never enough Mongols to run the factories. They couldn't be forced to go there, and if they did they fell asleep in the corners. So, years later, all these unfortunate Hungarians were still running the factories.

"I was in Ulan Bator for about four months. By then, I had reached a moment when I decided that my mother needed a bit of consideration and that I ought to stay home for a while. It was my last foreign posting. And then along came Somerville."

THE difference between literary characters who are one-dimensional and those who are fully developed, E. M. Forster once wrote, is that the former never surprise, while the latter have the incalculability of life about them. Forster's rule may hold for literature, but it is a tricky adage to apply to real people. Daphne Park, as she has figured in all the incidents thus far related, never surprises, although one sees her being continually tested by situations ranging from the trying to the terrifying. There is oddly little drama to her stories, if by drama one means the tension of suspense. The audience knows that she will cope with the visa problems in Hanoi, that she will not flee the Congo, not abandon her duty in Stanleyville. Because of the very reliability of her character, her most extraordinary experiences acquire an almost humdrum quality. As Somerville College loomed upon the scene, however, completely out of the context of her diplomatic career and, it might seem, out of the context of her most characteristic interests, I sensed, for the first time, real tension—as though Daphne Park herself had been somewhat unsure how this chapter would end.



Somerville College stands between Walton Street and the Woodstock Road, in the former grounds of Walton House. Just past the porter's lodge is the Darbishire Quadrangle, a small enclosure of attractive weathered stone overgrown with wisteria. Passing under an archway that stands between the central college offices and the Senior Common Room, one enters the college gardens, edged by the library and the student halls. In the late afternoon, when the shadows across the lawn are long, Somerville is imbued with the melancholy beauty that is so much a part of Oxford at its best—a far cry from the heat of Hanoi or the vast jungles of Zaire.

"In 1978, I was invited to be a candidate for the principalship, and I was deeply honored to be asked," she recalled. "At the time, I suspect I thought of it as going to another continent. The prospect of a brand-new career was interesting; my Foreign Office career would have ended in 1981, when I reached sixty, in any case, so the move would be practical. In my preliminary interviews, I had found the Fellows to be stimulating, attractive, tough people. I envisioned many evenings of good talk. I seized the opportunity—I didn't sit down and think if I wanted to do it."

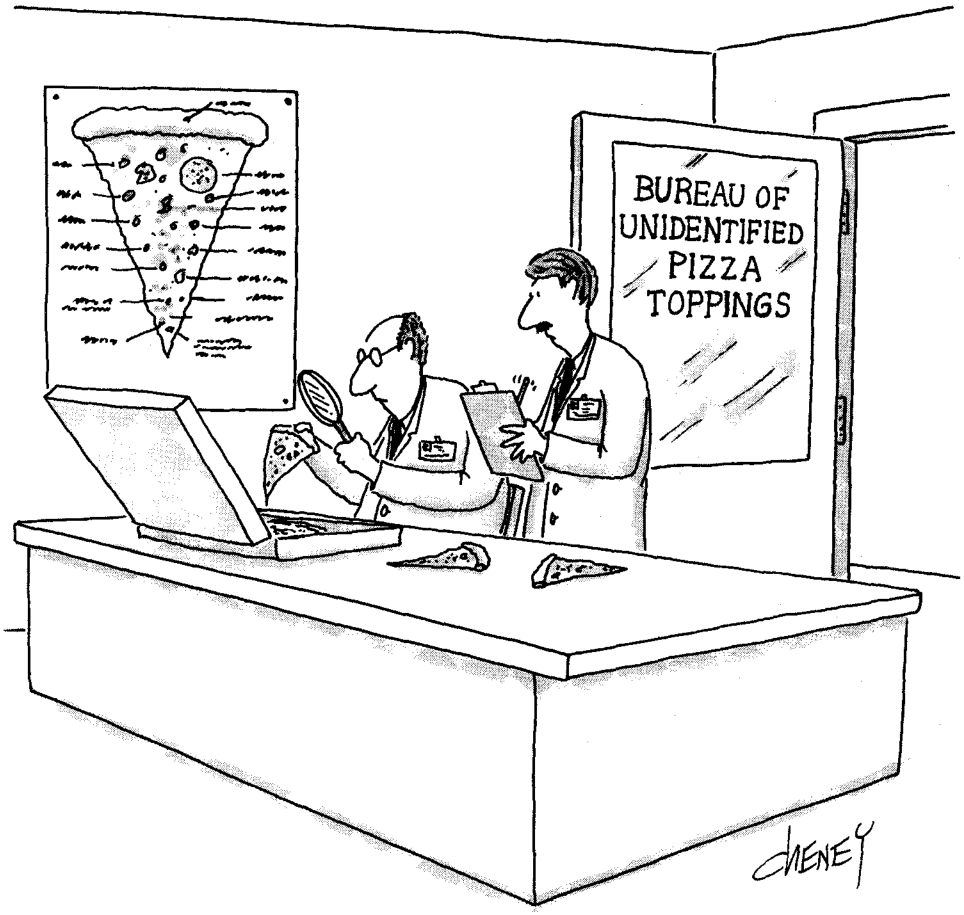
In February of 1979, Daphne Park was told that she had been elected to the principalship, with her term to begin in October, 1980. She retired early from the Foreign Office, so as to have time to become acquainted with the Somerville bureaucracy and with the wider educational issues in Britain, but this plan was thwarted by a sudden decline in her mother's health.

"My mother finally had to admit that she was desperately ill. She was eighty years old, and had lately undergone two major operations, and was very frail. The time I had allocated to preparation was taken up by moving her from London to Oxford and nursing her. It was the most awful year of my life. I was overworked and got crotchety, and so my life at Somerville began very badly. I spent my weekends at home with my mother, and this was resented by the college. I suspect that in that first year a lot of the optimism, energy, and enthusiasm they had seen in the interviews wasn't there. I worked hard, but my mind was divided. Also, it was assumed that I would instinctively know what was needed, and I didn't. I would be told, after the fact, that 'we always do *x* in the fifth week of Michaelmas term.' I would reply that I hadn't known. 'But, good heavens,' they would say. 'I thought you were a Somervillean!' I seemed always to be doing things the day after they were due."

All her years of experience in far-flung places, her interaction with peoples of different religions, races, tribes, and political outlooks, had not prepared her for the intricacies of the unwritten procedural code of an Oxford college, handed down by oral tradition through the generations and composed of taboos as binding as any found in the jungles of Africa.

"I learned by painful experience that if you wish to communicate with a member of the Senior Common Room you put a note in her pigeonhole and expect to receive a response in a few days' time. You do *not* pick up the phone and communicate directly with the individual: in the morning, she may be doing her research and not want to be disturbed, and in the afternoon she may be teaching and not want to be disturbed. I did not know this; I was brought up in a world of telephones. The principal is expected to have lunch every day in college, and expected to stay afterwards for coffee, so that any Fellow can take me to a windowsill and put her problem to me. These were all procedures I had to learn by experience.

"My mother died at the end of my second year. That has left a lasting wound. She died on a Tuesday morning, and, the weekend before, there had been a Gaudy—a festive dinner for alumnae—one of the college's most important occasions, and I had been in college the whole of Saturday and Sunday. I returned on Monday to break in our new housekeeper, and on Tuesday morning I went downstairs to show her how to make my mother's tea. When I went back up, my mother was dead. I can't forget having been away from her that last weekend. So"—she pushed her spectacles higher up on her nose—"the first two years were hard. It was only after my mother died that I was able to take a deep breath and put my full attention to the job."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The gravest problem currently facing Somerville is financial. All the Oxbridge colleges have been suffering from the Thatcher Government's cutbacks in domestic subsidies, but the few remaining women's colleges have been hit hardest of all. Lacking the centuries-long acquisition of property and "old boy" bequests, Somerville has very little capital endowment to sustain it through these lean times. In 1983, the college launched a five-million-dollar fund-raising drive. In America, which has traditionally had close links with the college, the appeal is called the American Margaret Thatcher Fund for Somerville, after the college's illustrious alumna. The defense of this appeal's title, which strikes many as either a bad joke or an oxymoron, has drawn on the Principal's deepest diplomatic powers, and she carefully outlines her reasoning: Whatever the policies of the Government, she says, Margaret Thatcher herself has been at all times loyal to Somerville, and has personally helped the college on several occasions (for example, by speaking on its behalf and by hosting a fund-raising dinner at 10 Downing Street); the Prime Minister is popular abroad, and her name would attract more attention than Somerville's alone; it would be shortsighted not to capitalize on Somerville's claim to one of the most prominent heads of state of the day; in short, Margaret Thatcher's name is a name to conjure with.

"The Prime Minister made the country face the fact that we were paying out money that we didn't have," she said. "I know from the many councils I sit on that universities alone have not been victimized, as is often the picture presented. I chair the Lord Chancellor's Legal Aid Advisory Committee; from August, 1982, until September, 1987, I was a governor of the BBC; I am a member of the British Library Board. All these institutions were hit by cutbacks; it was not a policy maliciously designed to thwart the universities. We have all been made to realize that we cannot sit like birds in the nest with our beaks open. We are never again going to get money as a right. The British universities don't have a tradition of fund-raising, as is the case in America. We have had to change our attitude, and go out and convince people of our worth. In Britain, the excellence of the universities is assumed; in America, one expects to have to say how good they are. In

America, people want a little more flesh on the bones; they ask the same kinds of questions that a businessperson in England would ask. I think it is healthy that we give an account."

On the domestic front, the new principal of Somerville focussed on industry, garnering subsidized lectureships for the college and increased employment prospects for its graduates. This link with the corporate world was viewed at first with some suspicion by the college.

"When I went back to Somerville, graduates were largely going into the professions—law, civil service, medicine, to a lesser extent accounting, and, of course, teaching. These were all well-trodden paths, and the guidance and references needed were provided by the tutors. But the second-year students were beginning to experience great anxiety concerning their employment prospects. In actual fact, this was ridiculous—the unemployment rate for Oxford and Cambridge graduates is about three per cent. But they were spending hours filling out application forms, preparing résumés, and going to presentations. There were people doing classics, ancient history, languages, English literature who suddenly realized that they were not going to be able to teach. It was in vain to say to them, 'With your training, you can do anything.' They listened to all that, but they didn't believe it. I wanted to introduce the students to the outside world. I wanted to restore their confidence by educating them in the matter of job opportunities, so that they could see their way clear by the end of Michaelmas term of their third year. I began by including industrialists among the distinguished and interesting people traditionally invited to dine at High Table. And at first the Fellows would say to me, 'What a very odd man to have to dinner. *What* did you say he was?' Then, for the past few years, we have been holding open evenings for industry, to which all the second-year students are invited. Here they are able to meet the top management and recruitment of about fifty firms, as well as some very successful women. This gives the students an opportunity to ask the questions that they never get a chance to in the university presentations, where all the young men are sitting in the front.

"At the outset, I wanted the students to know that industry was not just wicked multinationals—that there is a part that Somerville graduates can play in the modern industrial world. And I wanted them to go out and work for industry—it seemed to me far more satisfying and exciting to set up a factory, for example, in an area where there is no work, and thereby to create jobs, than just to go into the City and make money make more money. I also thought that if industry saw the quality of the undergraduates it would be interested in employing them. In my third year, it dawned on me that I could also ask industrialists to give money to support subjects we wouldn't have money for." A number of companies, I.B.M., McDonnell Douglas, and G.E.C. among them, have contributed funds, lectureships, visiting fellowships, or equipment; Merrill Lynch is funding graduate awards tenable at either Harvard or Yale. Miss Park is particularly adroit at pointing out ways that subjects long thought of as "impractical" can be brought to bear on the commercial world; classicists and linguists, for example, can use their analytical and language skills to gain entrance into "the exciting new areas of high technology and sophisticated software."

The academic prospects of British university graduates are grimmer by far than those of their American counterparts. The Government cutback in funding caused a hundred and forty positions at Oxford alone to be frozen or cut, and the brain drain to America is a serious problem. Nevertheless, the justification of subjects such as classics and history by an appeal to their usefulness in the industrial and technological world would seem to run a grave danger of undermining their intrinsic value as academic disciplines. When I suggested this, Daphne Park, for the first time, sounded every inch a principal: "Yes, and that is just the sort of argument that has been made by many academics. But we are talking about the *survival* of certain subjects. It's no good going over the traditional arguments; today one has to show that these threatened subjects are a necessity. The entire Classics Department of Aberdeen University has gone, and it was a distinguished department. There *are* grave difficulties, but the answer is not just to wail about the Philistines in government and write long letters to the *Times*. Industry is capable of understanding that valuable things must be saved, but it must be given compelling reasons."

WIGS
CLOSED 2 WEEKS

In spite of the energy that Miss Park has brought to the task of fund-raising, Somerville is not yet out of the woods; less than half the target sum of five million dollars has been raised. And on the broader question of the future of the British universities she is not blind to certain seemingly unsolvable problems. "I am worried about pure research," she said. "It will take some very farsighted, very generous organization or individual to give money for something whose outcome is unknown. There *is* a real threat to the so-called peripheral subjects, and special efforts must be made by those who love those subjects to preserve them. And some distinction should be drawn between universities, and even departments; there is an enormous variation in the quality of their teaching. Excellence should count for something. Finally, the Government did not distinguish sufficiently between the areas where outside support can be obtained and those where it cannot. There was a certain amount of thrashing around and saying that everything must be cut. These things have to be sorted out."

Another issue that Somerville has had to face is that of retaining its single-sex status. At present, Somerville and St. Hilda's, both women's colleges, are the only colleges at Oxford that have not become coeducational. "I was asked at my first interview about the single-sex issue, which at the time I didn't know much about," Miss Park recalled. "I replied that the college had been single-sex when I was there, but that times had changed and if the college decided to go mixed I was perfectly happy working with men and would take it in stride. Two years ago, the question was put to the vote of the undergraduates themselves, as part of a process of consultation, when the governing body of the college was considering whether or not to change the statutes. The undergraduate view was overwhelmingly in favor of Somerville's staying the way it is. The single-sex college allows one to get the best of both worlds, in the Oxford system. One goes off to outside lectures, to classes, to clubs—there are a hundred things one can do outside the college. But the college provides the students with a base of their own, where they do not have to assert themselves. Even in colleges where there is a fifty-fifty distribution—which is rare—the women feel that they have to assert themselves to be equal. Our Junior Common Room is very active, and runs lots of programs, and many of these students feel that they would not be able to play the same role in the mixed colleges. Some women, of course, look forward to the challenge of being a minority, and in that case they have the choice to go to one of the other colleges. The question of choice is the strongest argument for the preservation of the single-sex institution.

"In a sense, Somerville has become to me what my country was before. And I feel a deep loyalty to it. I have become a totally shameless solicitor of funds. I have had to learn the entrepreneurial spirit, and I don't mind, because I have deep faith in the product. Being principal has entailed a radical change in my outlook in many respects. The successes of a diplomat lie in silence. A good public servant is actually quite private—one is trusted more by one's peers if one can be relied upon to speak privately. But at Somerville I have to be a public person. It is part of the job—part of keeping the college in the forefront of people's minds. I suppose the hardest thing was to learn that I was regarded by the scholars as *only* an administrator, which is not necessarily to be greatly respected."

I thought of Aristotle's formula for happiness—"the exercise of vital powers along lines of excellence, in a life affording them scope." Did she have any regrets?

"Not at all. I would have considered the job anyway, knowing all that lay ahead. I work very hard, and get little relaxation, but then I have always been a workaholic. I greatly value my association and friendship with a body of women as distinguished as our Fellows, and I also enjoy enormously the contact with young people—they are so positive, and have such lively enjoyment of things. My spirits lift when I am dealing with the undergraduates. In my former life, I worked with young diplomats and enjoyed helping them cut their teeth. I don't think of the students as the young but as human beings earlier on the path. In a sense, I'm age-blind. I'm happy with the very old, because I am so used to them, and I'm happy with the very young, because I enjoy watching them make discoveries. I want them to think they can make anything they want of their lives. I believe the college offers role models, among our alumnae, of women who have made it in the world: the undergraduates see that they really can do anything. I think Somerville does in some sense have a special essence of confidence."

Daphne Park's term of office has been extended beyond her originally projected date of retirement, which was 1987. Her new retirement date has been set for the end of the 1988-89 academic year, but she plans, "after a decent interval of absence," to settle in Oxford.

"I have come to feel at home there. And yet there are all sorts of things I would like to do. One never stops learning. If there is nothing to learn, nothing stimulating, one begins to die a small death. I would like to go to Burma—it is my Kathmandu, my Timbuktu, a place that simply attracts me. This is a marvellous world. I wish I could go on and on."

—CAROLINE ALEXANDER

• •

POETRY

From this pencil departs a path of black lead
and along it a letter like a dog makes its way—
and here is a word, an inhabited homestead,
which I may reach tomorrow or the following day.

—NINA CASSIAN

(*Translated, from the Rumanian, by William Jay Smith.*)

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LETTER FROM EUROPE

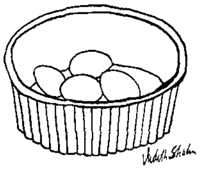
PARIS, JANUARY 19

ONE of my neighbors is a *conseiller d'état*, a mild and reflective count who takes snuff and sometimes votes Socialist, and watches the television news at dinner with his wife and children under large, dusty portraits of his ancestors, and, all in all, is the person who best represents for me the complicated, exasperating mix of entitlement, duty, and delight that the French refer to as their *mission civilisatrice*—their civilizing mission in the world. There are people who believe that the fewer real missions the French have, the more emphatic they get about their civilizing one, but the *conseiller* thinks that this is too simple. There are seventy-nine *conseillers* like my neighbor in France. They are the mandarins here, the smart people, the people who study the longest and pass the hardest tests and look after the constitution and oversee the ministries from small, cluttered offices and advise the politicians so that those merely flashy *personnages* do not harm the country irreparably when they are passing through the National Assembly or the Élysée on the votes of one party or another. The *conseillers* have transformed *le fait du prince* into what could be called *le fait de la république*, making it obvious—the historian François Furet likes to point this out—that in the institutions of Fifth Republic France, with its kingly Presidency, the French have finally reconciled their republican faith and their monarchic tendencies. The republic, as everybody knows by now, has just begun to celebrate its two-hundredth birthday. François Mitterrand has decreed a year of self-congratulation, which he refers to solemnly as *la réconciliation*, suggesting, indeed, that the country has been in a civil war for two hundred years and is only just discovering its common passions and its common cause. Last summer, when some television people filming a series on the French Revolution put up a guillotine in the Place de la Concorde (where the revolutionaries had theirs), an emissary from the President rushed to the Concorde with orders to take it down. "*Monsieur*," he said to the producer, "*ce n'est pas notre conception de la Révolution!*"

The last time I saw the *conseiller*, the French were voting on a referendum, an elaborate (and some say constitutionally suspect) referendum having to do with the future of their Pacific islands of New Caledonia. I try to visit him and hear what he has to say whenever something happens here to engage that notion of a special civilizing mission, to confirm or contradict or redefine it, and over the past year a lot happened. There was New Caledonia, where what the French like to call "the principles of 1789" were clearly and embarrassingly at odds with France's self-esteem and its self-image. (The trouble in New Caledonia is that sixty-three thousand native Melanesians want to declare their own country, and a settler population of eighty-three thousand Frenchmen, Wallisians, Indonesians, Polynesians, and Southeast Asians are terrified that they will.) There was Algeria, and the terrible repression in Algeria—five hundred demonstrators shot by the Army, three thousand demonstrators arrested and many of them tortured—and that was even more embarrassing to the French than New Caledonia, because in the years since its own revolution Algeria has been a sacred object of the French left, a triumph for the principles of '89, an irrefutable proof that the republican legacy of liberty, equality, and fraternity has been passed along, like baraka, to France's old colonies. And then, of course, there was the Bicentennial itself, the anniversary of '89, which, as years go, turned out to be of much less interest to the French than, say, 1992—the year the twelve Common Market countries are supposed to stop arguing about interest rates and value-added taxes and animal quarantine and have a go at legal and economic federation. My neighbor said that, from what he saw, there was a real identity crisis in France right now. He said the country was changing so fast—looking around, looking ahead, looking to Europe, specifically, and to the idea of Europe as a kind of last chance for prominence, a last chance to be important in the face of America and Russia and the mysterious new market known here as *le Pacific rim*—that the things that used to define it, the objects in the iconography of being French and being important and having a civilizing mission, were of little interest and not much relevance anymore. He said that, for instance, he himself was of two minds about New Caledonia. Sometimes he wanted to let New Caledonia go, because he was, after all, thirteen thousand miles away from New Caledonia and he knew that in the end the fears raised when Kanak revolutionaries—the Melanesians there are called Kanaks—killed French policemen or took French hostages, as they did last spring, were more properly Australia's

"I'd rather stand, if you don't mind."

fears about native terrorism and hegemony in the Pacific than his own. Sometimes, though, he simply believed that New Caledonia belonged to France. It was not meant to be a little tin-pot country of a hundred and fifty thousand people. It was part of a proper country of fifty-five million people who voted in French elections and sent deputies to a French parliament, and it could not be separated from the "idea" of France. Sometimes, he said, he wondered what Americans (or, for that matter, Canadians) would do if a tribe in some remote state (or province) started demanding independence. He doubted whether the Americans would hand over a state or hold a referendum on secession. The question was serious to him. It was not retrograde. It had nothing to do with snuff or ancestors. It was, to his mind, a very appropriate question, and he asked it as a republican and a Frenchman who, whatever the family politics in 1789, had come to believe that France, in exporting itself and the institutions of its Fifth Republic, was exporting the best chances in the world.



The referendum on New Caledonia was something of a sleight of hand. The *projet de loi* alone took up eight pages of nearly microscopic print. It was too long and too obscure and certainly too legalistic for ordinary Frenchmen to follow, and what it accomplished, in fact, was a moratorium on talking about independence, or fighting about independence, for ten years—by which time there will undoubtedly be more Kanaks than settlers in New Caledonia anyway. Its real importance in Paris was symbolic, because (despite Tahiti and Réunion and French Guiana and the French West Indies, which seem to be indolently, and even comfortably, French right now, and despite New Caledonia's special status as a participating "overseas territory" of France) New Caledonia is in spirit, if not in fact, the last colony, the dead end of the imperial line. The process of letting go that began in Morocco and Algeria—Morocco with its rich history and Algeria its "million martyrs" to the revolution—is ending on a couple of not very exotic Pacific islands with a penal-colony past no deeper than the sandy topsoil and revolutionaries who come to the polls to reject the values of the French Republic wearing loincloths and cowrie shells. And this is something the French find almost intolerable. My neighbor says that maybe it can be compared to America's going wrongheadedly to war in Vietnam and (depending on your point of view) staying or not staying around to do the right thing by the wrong decision. At any rate, he never really wanted to let Algeria go, either—not even when everyone he knew was marching for independence and sending money to the F.L.N. and arguing about the best ways to get out of fighting. Like most Frenchmen, whatever their politics, he believes that the world would probably be better off French. It puzzles him when foreigners are obtuse about their own best interests. The violence in Algeria last fall confirms his instinct that "we left too soon," that France abandoned its most important colony before its mission was accomplished. He knows that eventually the French will leave New Caledonia, but he wants the people who preside over the departure to do it properly and with dignity—by which he means leaving "France" behind them.

Children in New Caledonia are like children in Paris or Lille or Montpellier. They take the same courses and the same exams, and the Minister of Education is comforted by the knowledge that at two-thirty in the afternoon every ten-year-old in "France" is getting to know all about, say, apple production in Calvados or barge tonnage on the Rhône. Learning about apples in Calvados is part of being French, and it is part of the colonial mission. The policy here has always been to diffuse Frenchness, to spread France across an empire (as opposed to the British policy, which held that a foreigner had no claim on England until he had actually settled into Oxbridge lodgings). It created a network of Francophiles all over the Francophone world, a network of men and women bound, as surely as the seventy-nine *conseillers* are bound, by what the French call their *formation*. The idea was simple—an acquaintance with Voltaire's thought and Napoleon's law and Racine's metrical foot would give those colonial Francophiles (and, with them, France) a fine advantage in what was often, indeed, a cowrie-shell world—and for better or worse it was probably accurate, although a lot of people,

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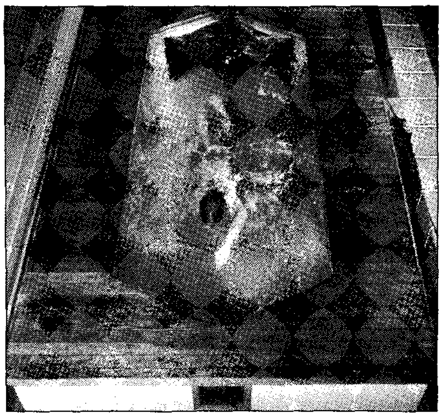

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including French people, found it hard to explain how a Kanak schoolboy in Hienghene was better served by a French agricultural table than by a working knowledge of what would grow in New Caledonia, or why he was better "educated" for having memorized the names of the ninety-six French departments than the names of his own Melanesian islands. It didn't matter much if the place was an important colony, like Algeria, or an overseas department, like Réunion, or a territory, like New Caledonia, or if it went by any of the other names the French thought up to describe their subjects' status and their own authority. Algeria came through eight years of revolution with its million dead but with what the French (and many Algerians) persisted in regarding as its Frenchness intact. It had good French manners and a better French accent in its ministries than you will find in most French provinces, and there was a certain noblesse oblige in its diplomatic posture which could have been invented on the Quai d'Orsay. It also had the oil and gas that the French wanted, and it sold them at friendly "Francophone prices," adding, for good measure, the services of a million unskilled Algerian migrant workers. Mourad Oussedik, who organized the famous lawyers' coöperative that defended Algerian prisoners during the revolution—and who, at sixty-two, is a kind of paterfamilias to the Algerians here—says that, what with its gas and its oil and its cheap labor, free Algeria was a goose that kept on laying golden eggs for France, and nobody kills a goose like that because of bad barnyard habits. Now that oil is plentiful and cheap and gas worth next to nothing, now that the economy here is suffering, too, and millions of native Frenchmen are out of work, it does not cost France anything to complain about Algeria.

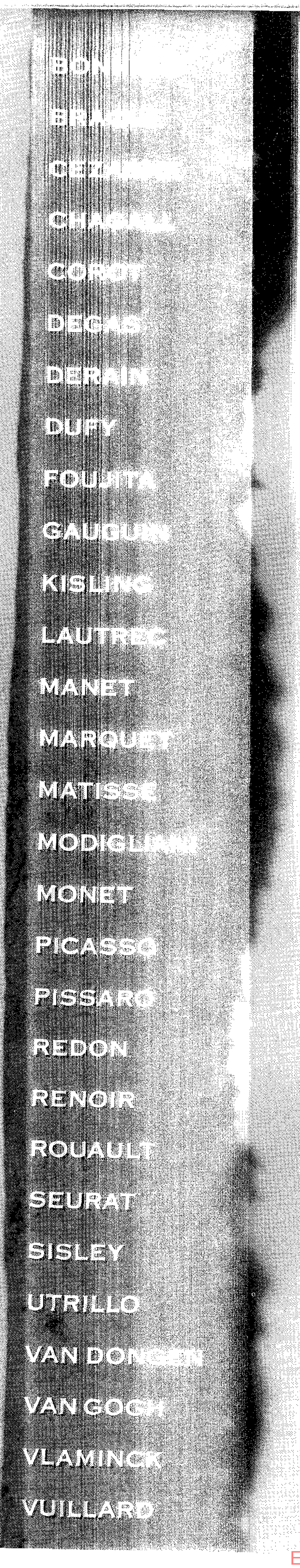
THE fact is that since the fighting stopped, in 1962, there has been no freedom in Algeria—and, for reasons peculiar to the French, it has been much easier for Algerians than Frenchmen to admit or accept this. The democracies, as Oussedik often says when he talks about Algeria and about why he doesn't live in Algeria, did not export their democracy. They exported their prerogatives, and when they went away they left behind what old colonials sometimes call "the colonial mentality." In Algeria's case, they left a deference to authority, even an appetite for authority. They left a one-party state that took its cadre from the freedom fighters of the F.L.N. (actually, the Front de Libération Nationale *became* that party) but ended up taking its orders from the Army.

It could be said that in Algeria the legacy of 1789 was less compelling than the legacy of 1793—which was the year the Terror started. Houari Boumedienne took over the country in 1965 in a coup d'état and arrested his old comrade President Ahmed Ben Bella, and after that dissent of any kind was illegal. Anyone who disagreed with Boumedienne was a counter-revolutionary, and anyone who disagreed too loudly was thrown in jail until he changed his mind. What made Boumedienne "acceptable" (to the degree that Algerians did accept him) seems to have been that he stopped short of actually murdering his enemies or his imagined enemies—and so, at least until a couple of months ago, did Chadli Benjedid, his successor.

The common wisdom under Boumedienne was that political freedom was not "natural" or "appropriate" for Algeria. Freedom was fine for the West, maybe, but there was nothing in it for the soldiers and citizens of Algerian independence. "Pluralism" was a bad word. Intellectuals in Constantine and Algiers talked about pluralism as a kind of colonial strategy, something the West kept trying to impose on countries like Algeria for its own dark purposes. It was said that politics would only weaken Algeria, and make it vulnerable again. Boumedienne pointed out that Algeria had lost its best young men to politics—on the eve of their revolution, those young men were killing each other over questions of politics and ideology and, of course, authority—and so it was his plan to replace politics with "Socialism."

Algeria was much touted in the Third World for that odd Socialist principle. It became a kind of model. Its mines were nationalized, and so were its big farms and factories and, obviously, its oil and gas fields. Its diplomats went forth—smart and soothing—to settle a variety of Middle East crises. But the law at home was retrograde, a convenient combination of the Code Napoléon and Islamic domestic law which, among other things, took the young women who had fought so bravely for their revolution and put them back under the "protection" of their husbands and fathers. The government was corrupt. There was no vision of the future. Nobody thought much about what kind of country Algeria was going to be, and it may be that during the years of the oil-and-gas boom no one had to. What the Algerians (like the French) did think about was status. They got to be known for a "*pur et dur*" diplomacy, and their reputation abroad masked the lack of liberty at home. The French, for their part, never challenged that reputation. The right regretted Algeria and the far right despised Algeria, but the left, whose protests against the war had nearly torn France apart, seems to have been more concerned with freedom *for* Algeria than with freedom *in* Algeria. French intellectuals—including many of the hundred and twenty-one men and women who drafted the famous "Manifeste des 121" in 1960 to protest the war and the damage to young French conscripts forced to fight and torture in the war—tended to lose interest in Algeria once the war was over. Charles de Gaulle, who had staked his power on ending it, was busy inventing himself as the head of a grateful and admiring Francophone family; like a good bourgeois father, he was much more interested in respect than in justice. As Algeria turned regressive and then repressive, as civil rights became arbitrary—Algerians say "discretionary"—and a dissident could be jailed one day for teaching or writing what he had taught or written openly the day before, Parisians who had no trouble talking about repression in, say, Chile or South Africa, or, indeed, the Soviet Union, would explain that what happened in Algeria was between Algerians. Algeria's "problems" were no one else's business.

There was tremendous guilt in



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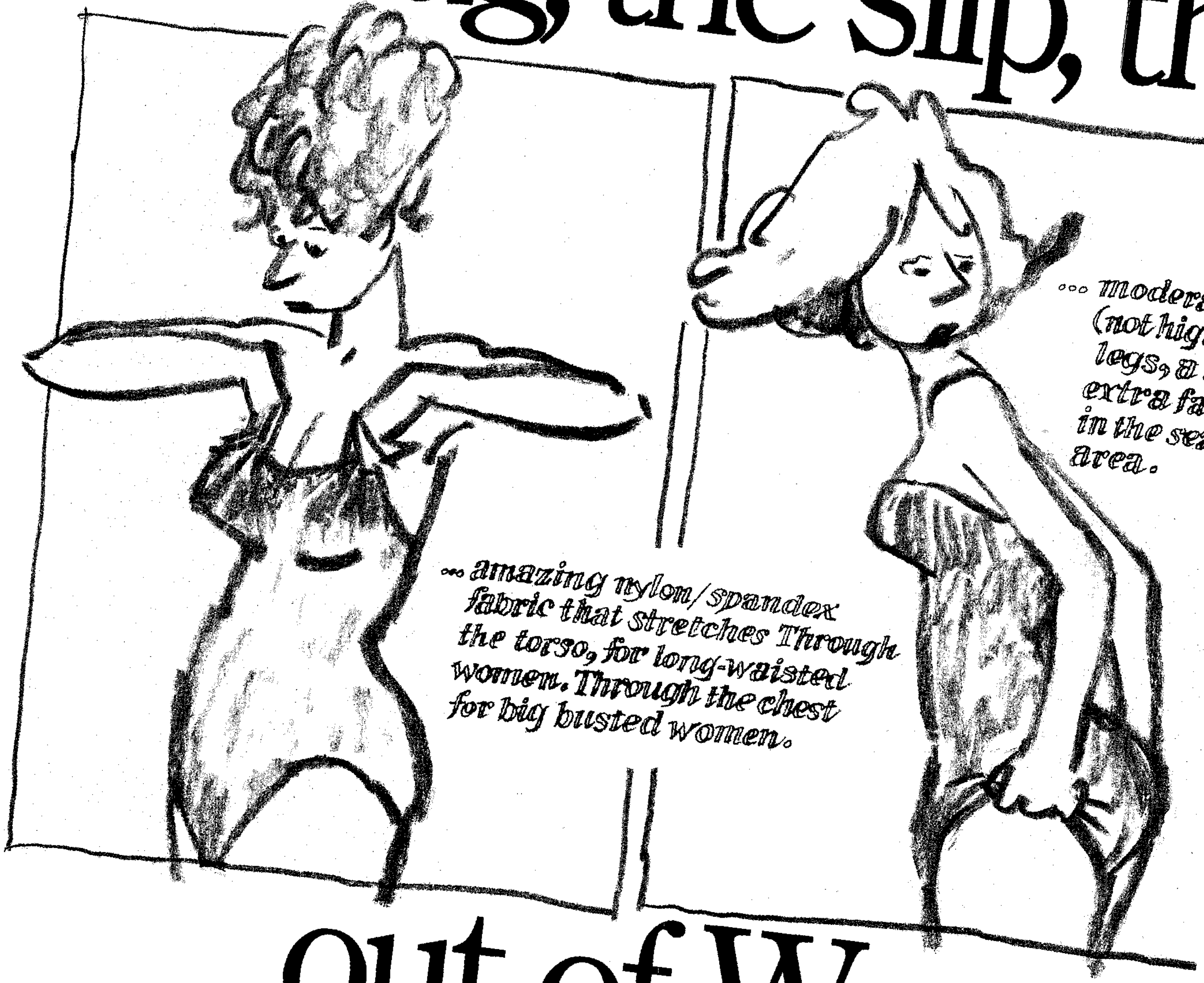

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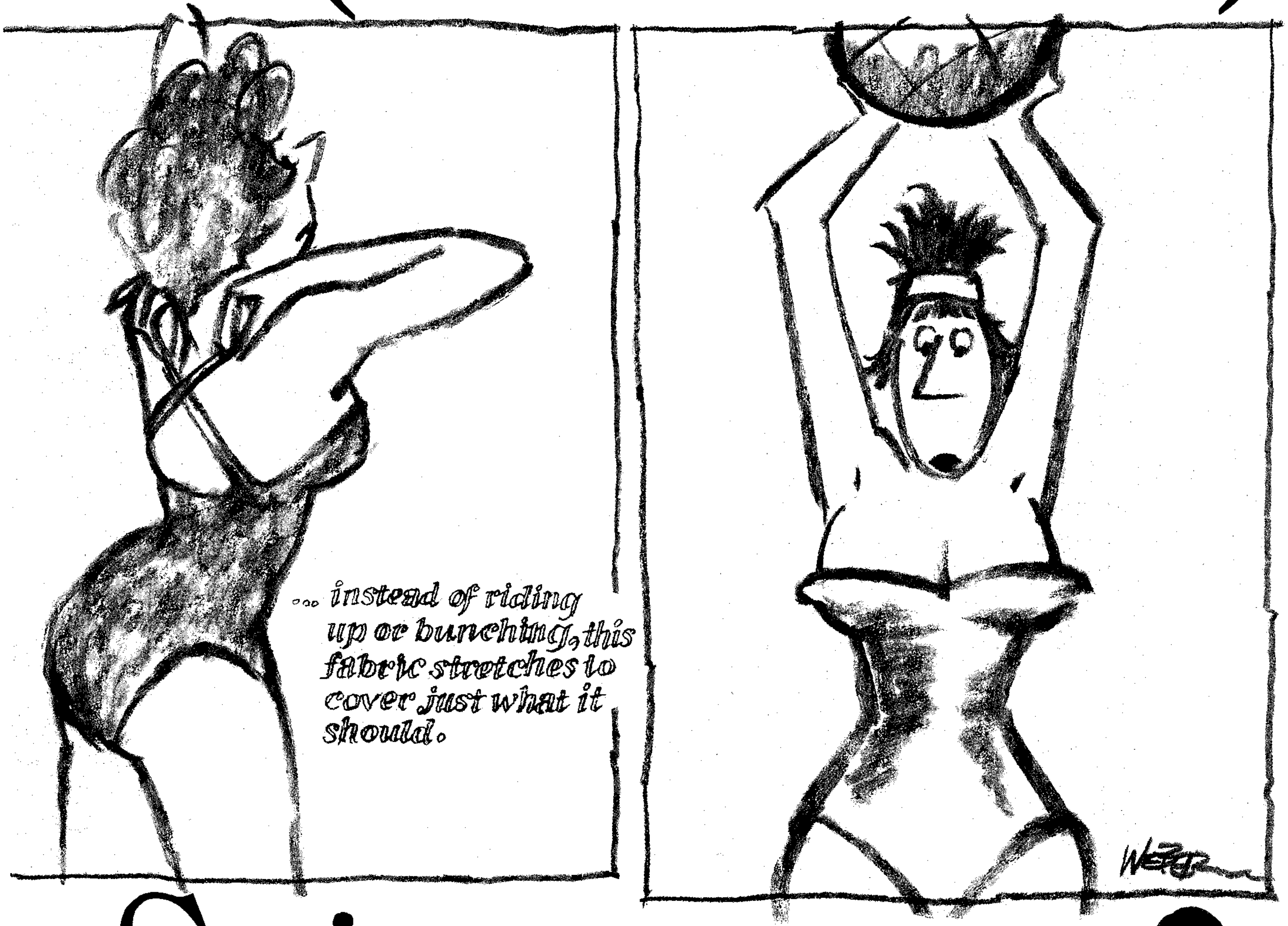

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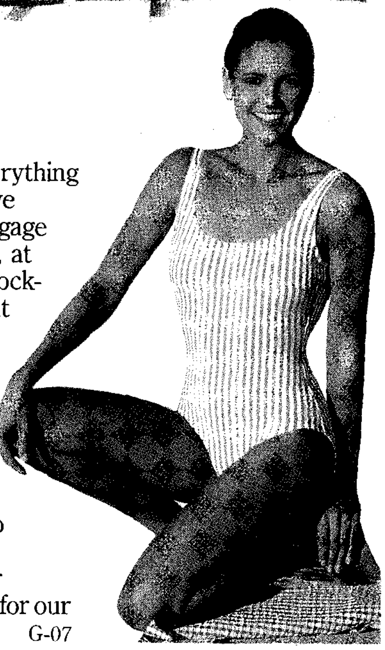

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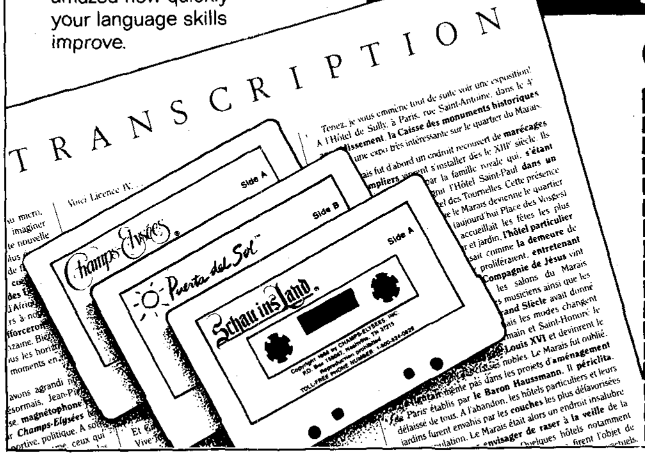

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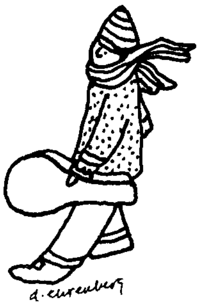
France over Algeria. It was hard for Frenchmen, after their own conduct in Algeria—after the killing and the torturing and the mass trials—to fault Algeria for not behaving democratically. It was hard for anyone who had been in Paris on October 17, 1961, when French policemen shot three hundred Algerian workers out demonstrating against the war, to talk about a police state in Algiers. But mainly it was hard for the French, having left Algeria, to imagine that the idea of France had not taken in Algeria, that a hundred and thirty-two years of French influence and example had not "civilized" the Algerians, had not turned them into proper democrats. None of this had very much to do with Algeria. Even in the best times, nostalgia for Algeria did not have much to do with Algeria or with what Algerians thought about the people who conquered them. The Algerians may have admired the French—aped their cynicism and perfected their Frenchness and seized their "French" advantage in the Third World—but they never welcomed the French and clearly they never loved them. Their history with the French was always a history of antagonism, and the oddest thing about it is that even during the terrible middle years of the war, when the fighting was slaughter and plastique was exploding in every French café and movie theatre in the country, there were Frenchmen (and some Algerians) who lived for the mysterious right moment that would make life in Algeria agreeably French again. In a way, it was those Frenchmen who practiced a real Orientalism (and not the great amateurs of the East like Flaubert and Gide and Delacroix, who knew the ambiguities of their attraction). In the end, twenty-six years after Évian, it was easier for them to ignore what was happening in Algeria than to take some of the responsibility for it. It was certainly easier to dismiss the brutality of the war than to begin to count the complicated moral cost of that brutality, let alone of nearly a century and a half of settlement, to the Algerians themselves.

Jonathan Randal, who lives in Paris and covers North Africa and the Middle East for the Washington *Post*, says that Algeria was the "Third World dream" of the French intellectual. It was a double-standard dream, in which countries that repressed their people in the name of Socialism were exempt from the sort of judgment the French levelled at everybody else—and, indeed, the Algerians levelled at everybody else, in their own French fashion. The Algerians took the prerogative of their terrible loss to turn themselves into fairly nasty moralists. At the same time, it was illegal to hold a meeting in Algeria, illegal to strike, illegal to demonstrate, illegal to start a political party, illegal to speak or publish freely. Over the years, life got worse and worse for ordinary Algerians. Oil revenue began to drop (it has been cut in half now), and unemployment began to rise, and the official F.L.N. slogan, "For a better life," was conspicuously replaced by "Work and rigor." There were nine million Algerians when the French left in 1962. Now there are twenty-four million Algerians, and two-thirds of them are under twenty-five and have no prospects for jobs, let alone better jobs or better lives. This is mainly why they started protesting. There had been Berber protests in Kabylia in 1980 and *lycée* protests in Oran in 1982, but then, in 1986, there were protests in Constantine that must have involved every student and *chômeur* and young worker in the city. Algerians today refer to Constantine as "the dress rehearsal." Four people died in Constantine. (The policemen who were sent to stop the students ran away, and had to be ordered back to arrest them secretly, in the middle of the night, at home.) This fall, in Algiers hundreds of people died, and the ones who made it alive to prison came home describing their experience in words that one Algerian—a writer in exile—said he had believed were "buried forever in some terminological charnel house of the years 1954-62."

Normally, when France has something awkward to tell Algeria the French Socialist Party sends a message to the F.L.N., and there is a sort of exchange—"Socialist to Socialist," the Algerians say—and no one is embarrassed. This time, the French were embarrassed. Algeria had been the jewel in their postcolonial republican crown for so long and against so much evidence—the evidence, for one thing, that Algeria was a stopover for terrorists on their way into and out of France—that the French took the repression in Algeria personally, like parents whose child is disgracing them in public. At first, no one talked. Mitterrand disappeared into the Élysée, and Michel Rocard, the Prime Minister, tried to explain his silence by saying that "it happens in certain situations that silence has a much heavier meaning than words that come too quickly." It was rumored that the "mullahs" were responsible—that the eight thousand Algerians who marched from the Grand Mosque in Bab el-Oued after Friday prayers on October 7th and the twenty thousand Algerians who started marching on October 10th and were attacked by soldiers were Muslim fundamentalists and fanatics. (Actually, no one says "mullah" in Sunni Islam, which is the Islam practiced in Algeria, but the French got used to "mullah" during the revolution in Iran, and now everybody here uses it.) Every paper and magazine in Paris ran some version of the famous news photograph of the Algerian demonstrators kneeling, heads to the ground and bottoms up, during a call to prayer, and the sight of those endless regimental rows of bottoms, disappearing down streets and around corners, seemed to confirm the notion that something unaccountable and exotic and probably horrible was going on in Algeria. The truth, of course, is that men in Muslim countries often stop to pray when the muezzin chants a call to prayer, and they are especially careful to pray on Fridays, which is the Muslim sabbath—and this does not necessarily make them warriors of some Islamic jihad. Mosques are meeting places in Algeria. The great French Islamicist Jacques Berque once pointed out that mosques are "*lieux spontanés*"—places of spontaneous community and reaction, like soccer stadiums. This was true in Algeria through years of colonialism, and it is just as true today, because mosques and sports stadiums are the *only* places where Algerians can congregate in any

numbers without getting into trouble.

Certainly the “mullahs” in Algeria are getting stronger. A lot of Algerians—religious and not—think the “mullahs” represent the only institution in the country which has not been compromised and corrupted, and this gives them a moral status that goes way beyond the practical status of Islam in Algerian life. The “mullahs” are great conspirators and plotters. They seized the moment this fall and exploited it, but they did not create the moment. Nor was it odd to Algerians that once the rioting began in downtown Algiers and troops started shooting rioters the imams and ulema of Bab el-Oued (which happens to have been the site of the bloodiest battle of the Algerian war) should organize demonstrations, or that they should organize the first one on a Friday, when they could count on thousands of men to be on hand, praying. What *was* odd to Algerians was that so many foreigners preferred to blame the “mullahs” rather than the F.L.N. or the Army or Chadli Benjedid, the Algerian President, who represents them both.



ONE week after the first riots in Algiers, Franz-Olivier Giesbert, the new editor of *Le Figaro*, published an editorial about “selective indignation.” He wanted to know why intellectuals here, who were usually vocal in the cause of human rights, had been so notably silent about the repression in Algeria. He said that the Algerians demonstrating in the streets of France, shouting “*Chadli assassin!*,” were also wondering. He said it was time for French intellectuals to stop being hypocritical and inane, and, having said that, he made the intellectuals furious, because they had always considered Giesbert to be one of them, a proper bourgeois leftist, and now he was not only insulting them—he was insulting them on the front page of a shamelessly reactionary newspaper like *Le Figaro*. Giesbert had come to *Le Figaro* in September, saying, by way of an announcement, that he had never been a leftist after all (which was true) but a “liberal” in the American fashion, and that he was going to turn *Le Figaro* into a great newspaper *à l’américaine*, like the Washington *Post* or the New York *Times*. The paper was making money when he took it over, but it was a venomous paper, and it was losing its influence—its “important” Paris readers—the way it had lost some of its important editors and columnists (Raymond Aron was one of them) after the people who owned it sold out to Robert Hersant, a publisher from Nantes who had got a good start in the news business under the German Occupation. It is hard to say whether Hersant—by now he owns more papers and magazines than anyone else in France—was looking for better readers or for bigger profits or for respectability for himself or whether he was simply tired of abusing François Mitterrand, but sometime in the past year he seems to have decided that it was more interesting to try to restore *Le Figaro* to some of its old prominence than to maintain a newspaper no self-respecting intellectual would be seen dead reading at the Flore. He hired Giesbert away from *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a strikingly boring weekly (“soft Socialist” is how one Parisian described it), and Giesbert wrote his editorial and caused a minor scandal. It was the first time in anybody’s memory that a reporter with respectable “left” credentials—even lapsed credentials—had written about the awful mess Algeria had made of its independence. Giesbert called Algeria “a screaming symbol of the fiasco of the Third World.”

In a few days, it looked as if everyone in France had something pressing to say about the fiasco. Everyone was arguing about Algeria, everyone was either making excuses for Algeria or documenting his own clean record on Algeria or explaining that he had simply, properly, left Algeria to the Algerians until “human issues” were involved. Politicians on the right were accusing the left of indulging Algeria, and politicians on the left were accusing the right of relief, and even glee, at Algeria’s expense, and, as for Algeria itself—Algeria officially accused the French, left and right, of “a coldly calculated hysteria.” Thirty-two men and women from the days of the “Manifeste des 121” got together and wrote a new manifesto. They asked the government here to “intervene” (presumably with its influence, and not its Army), so that “the Algerian authorities would put an end to a politics that dishonors an independent Algeria.” They got so much attention that their friends started writing manifestos and signing petitions and giving interviews and writing articles. The historian Claude Roy wrote in *Le Monde* about acknowledging an “alibi of non-interference.” The feminist lawyer Gisèle Halimi complained to *Libération* that all these years her Algerian friends had misinformed her (although she did acknowledge having noticed that the heroines of the Algerian Revolution had all been sent “back to their couscous”). Two old professors emeriti from the Sorbonne analyzed their guilt and their friends’ guilt and France’s guilt and Algeria’s guilt in articles called “On a ‘Silence,’ ” and “Solidarity!” And then the Algerians in France entered the argument. A Beur named Nordine Chérif—in *banlieue* argot, with its rhymes and inversions, a young Arab born in France is a “Beur”—told *Le Monde* that he didn’t want to talk *too* much about Algeria. He didn’t want to be “open to accusations of double allegiance,” like “certain French Jews” who were seen to be so much more interested in what was happening in Israel than in anything happening here that they stirred up prejudice against themselves. But inasmuch as he *was* talking, he should probably say that it was pointless to demand democracy for Algeria when there was no democratic opposition *in* Algeria—not even in the underground. He said that all there was in Algeria was despair. Another Beur said that he and his friends were beginning to wonder whether all those years of revolution were worth it if what you ended up with was Algerian soldiers shooting Algerian children in front of the headquarters of the F.L.N. And a third Beur added that the real danger was not just soldiers but a “holy alliance” of soldiers and fundamentalists, joining forces to “save Algeria” from a discredited regime. He said that everybody in Algeria knew this. They knew it because their friends in Paris watched French television and read French papers, and then called them with the news.

A few weeks after the trouble in Algeria, a sociologist from the University of Oran, on leave in Paris to run an official Algerian magazine for Beurs called *Actualité de l’Émigration*, quit his job and walked out of his office with an unpublished editorial in his pocket.

The sociologist, whose name is Abdelkader Djeghloul, is a middle-aged man with a wife, a son, an occupational fondness for tweed jackets and long wool scarves, and a reputation for scholarship among his North African colleagues, and he thinks of himself as a disciplined man, not an innocent—a man used to working with the state and handling the problems of being an intellectual in a totalitarian country. Whenever he talks about himself, the first thing he says is that most of the time he is very disciplined, and not given to outbursts, and the second thing he says is that when his discipline cracks it cracks with a big noise and not much thought to the consequences. He was fourteen when the war was over in Algeria, and the first time he "lost his discipline," as he puts it, was in 1983, when he tried to organize a "bilingual epistemological colloquium" on the hundredth anniversary of Karl Marx's death, and was stopped, and quit, and, in the end, got back his job and his conference. The second time was the day he quit his job in Paris. The Algerians refused to let him publish his editorial, which was about the repression at home, and Djeghloul quit, and *Libération* printed it instead.

THERE are anywhere from three million to five million North Africans in France right now, if you count the migrant workers and their families, the children born here, the illegal immigrants, and the Harkis, who fought for France during the Algerian Revolution and were "repatriated" in 1962 with the French *colons*. There are a million and a half Beurs alone. About eight hundred thousand Beurs are children of Algerians, and they are tied to Algeria by family and by their own sentiment, and those ties strengthen or weaken to the degree that France rejects or accepts them, or their neighbors reject or accept them, or their classmates reject or accept them. A couple of years ago, the Beurs were pretty much united. The racism in France united them. Jean-Marie Le Pen's posters of Breton women in Arab veils and his rallies with everybody shouting "*Les Français d'abord!*" united them, and so did his thugs from the Front National marching on Arab neighborhoods with clubs and chains and German shepherds, and, finally, so did the casual distaste of millions of respectable French men and women who could accept the fact of a million Portuguese immigrants and hundreds of thousands of West African and Indo-Chinese immigrants but not what they took to be a Muslim nation within their own Christian country. For a while, thousands of Beurs were involved with a group called SOS-Racisme (which was run by a philosophy student with an Alsatian mother, a Martiniquan father, and the enchanting name of Harlem Désir). But SOS-Racisme got fashionable. Every ambitious politician in the country except Le Pen wanted to be a patron, and Yves Saint Laurent's business partner, Pierre Bergé, was busy being what my neighbor calls "actively admirable" (Bergé was angling for a job in Mitterrand's new Cabinet, which he didn't get, although he did get president of the Paris Opéra) and giving it money, and after that word went out among Beurs that SOS-Racisme had been "incorporated" by the Socialists or that it was "run by Jews" or was part of "the Zionist conspiracy." One of the problems for young Beurs is that they carry Algerian attitudes—or, at least, the rhetoric of Algerian attitudes—around with them in their French lives, and those attitudes make them edgy and give them more enemies than they really have. Those attitudes focus the bitterness the Beurs here feel, and, in a way, prolong their dislocation. Israel cannot have very much reality for a young Beur living, say, in a project in Saint-Denis and working for a plumber (or, for that matter, for a young French Jew living in Saint-Denis and working for a plumber). He is not apt to have much experience with Jews, even French Jews, and he probably has even less experience with Palestinians. But he wears his attitudes like a badge. They identify him, the way the SOS-Racisme badge of an open hand—"*Touche pas à mon pote*," it says; "Don't touch my buddy"—used to identify him. They give him a belief that excites him. They tap the same exasperated energy that the "mullahs," moving into the North African new towns outside Paris, tap with their rabid and aggressive Islam. And, of course, they isolate him. Three years ago, SOS-Racisme had a rock concert in the Place de la Concorde, and two hundred thousand boys and girls—French, African, and Arab—showed

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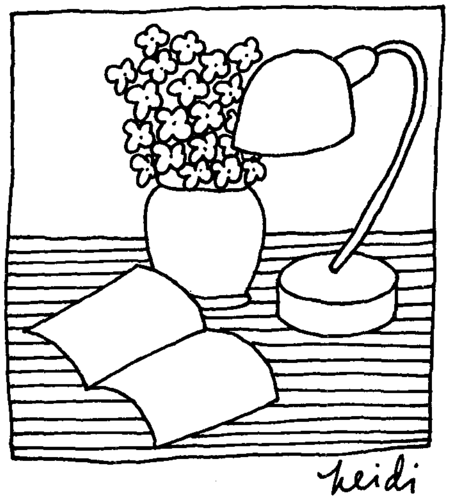
up. This fall, when the group called a demonstration against the violence in Algeria, only five thousand people came.

Abdelkader Djeghloul says that he never intended to leave his university and work as a journalist in Paris. He intended to stay home in Oran and finish his doctoral research on "the formation of the Algerian intellectual between 1880 and 1980." He came, he says, because the idea of addressing (and observing) millions of young European Arabs was "politically and sociologically fascinating" to him. It was a difficult choice, because Djeghloul does not belong to the F.L.N.—not many real Algerian intellectuals do—and the magazine he was going to run belonged to something called the Amicale des Algériens en Europe, which is a kind of agitprop office of the F.L.N. in Europe. But in the end, he says, the job was irresistible. He wanted to use the magazine to "*décomplexer*" the Beurs here. He wanted to help settle the confusion of boys and girls who did not know whether they were French or Algerian or both or neither, to give them a sense that what they *were*—Arabes de France, Djeghloul calls them—was something positive, a link between their two countries, a kind of avant-garde. He knew that their future depended, in large part, on their settling this confusion. It depended on how calm and clear about themselves they were, taking up their lives here—on how well they fielded the stereotypes of Front National propaganda, which made them out to be street thugs and fanatics, not to mention how well they fielded the imprecations of the "mullahs," who tried to convert them to a holy war, and the seductions of the Amicale des Algériens en Europe, which wanted to use them as little overseas cadres of the Party "at home." According to the Amicale, France's version of the "events" in Algeria was "hatred, lies, and manipulations." According to the Amicale, the French were trying to "reconquer" Algeria. (The joke going around Algiers right now is that Mitterrand has his eye on Algeria; he is scared that the Algerians are going to give it back.)

THE law says that any Algerian child born in France since January 1, 1963, is automatically a French citizen. The law is special for Algerians. France recognizes dual citizenship, and that means that Beurs can vote in French *and* Algerian elections. (Algeria, on the other hand, claims that Beurs are really Algerian, and only Algerian. The one concession Algeria makes is that Beurs can choose the country in which to do their military service. Most Beurs manage to avoid doing it in either.) It also means that, with as much as ten per cent of the population here already Muslim, Muslims are sooner or later going to get involved in French politics, and run for town councils and Assembly seats and join the big political parties, and ask for party jobs and a measure of party power. Twenty years ago, they had no politics except what Oussedik calls "the politics of each other." The Communists despised them, and the Communists' union, the Confédération Générale du Travail, didn't want them (which is why so many Communists in factory cities in the South of France have gone over to the Front National). The Moroccans hated the Algerians, and there was so much hatred among the Algerians themselves—deep, war hatred—that the children of Algerian workers took it as a patriotic trust to beat up Harki children whenever they could get them alone after a Saturday-night village dance or a Sunday soccer game, or in a high-school bathroom. Only a few years ago, there was still so much hatred between immigrants and Harkis that Le Pen was able to find a Harki who would sit on the central committee of the Front National and think up ways to throw the other Algerians out of the country. But now the Algerians here are beginning to get along. Algerian fathers go to mosque on Fridays and start talking, and then they introduce their families, and soon their children are marrying, because, as Djeghloul explains it, "if you are one of those fathers, and your Fatima is eighteen, it is better that she marry Muhammad, even if Muhammad is the son of a Harki, than that she marry Pierre." A lot of children have stopped calling themselves "Algerians" or "Harkis" anyway. When people ask them what they are, they are apt to say, "*Je suis Arabe*," or, like Djeghloul, "*Arabe de France*," and this makes a tremendous difference in how they see themselves. Djeghloul says that being born here is what makes the difference. The young Arabes de France look at Algeria and say, sentimentally, "That's my country," but then they look at France and say, "No, this is my country." They get what they call "the French habit," the way Djeghloul must have got the habit to be able to write that there were terrible things happening in Algeria and expect to be published in an F.L.N. magazine. Sooner or later, most Algerians in France get the French habit. Oussedik calls it "integration by osmosis." He says that they become "French" because Algeria refuses them certain liberties—and that the longer they stay in France, getting used to those liberties, the more irreversibly French they are. Most of them have no real knowledge of Algeria and no real information about Algeria, despite the trips they take there, on vacation (and they are special people in Algeria, important people, because they live in France). Not even the Algerians *in* Algeria have much information about it. Oussedik says that the drama of underdeveloped countries like Algeria almost always has to do with censorship and secrecy—with people in power staying in power by keeping "information" to themselves. Intellectuals in Algeria get *their* information from the French press. They are not much better off in this than anyone in France. They read the same French papers. There is nothing at home for them to read—no Algerian analyses made in any depth by Algerian experts living in Algeria—to confirm their malaise or give it a community or a context. They have to depend on the Algerian intellectuals here in France for that context. They suspect (the Algerian human-rights leader Abdenour Ali-Yahia says this) that without those Algerians waiting



and writing and organizing in France no opposition would be possible for them today at home. Certainly, they have nothing to say to the Beurs who call with news—only yes, a lot of people were killed during the demonstrations, or no, the referendum on "reforms" held after the demonstrations did not mean much but was at least an opening, the first public admission since the revolution that Algeria was not an entirely happy place to live. More than two hundred and eighty-six thousand of the Algerians in France, including Beurs, registered to vote in that referendum, and eighty per cent of them did vote. It was the week the French were having *their* referendum on New Caledonia, and they did better than the French—only thirty-seven per cent of the French registered to vote voted—but from Oussedik's point of view it was not a very useful exercise. Oussedik says that the real questions a young Beur should be putting to himself are not about small reforms in Algeria—not about whether the Prime Minister in Algiers should answer to the President or the parliament—but about why he is here in France and how he got here. This will tell him more about Algeria, and his relation to Algeria, than he learns at an absentee-ballot box installed by the F.L.N. in Saint-Denis, or on the TF1 nightly news.

NORDINE CHÉRIF comes from Saint-Denis. He went to the Institut d'Études Politiques, or Sciences Po, and writes sometimes for papers like *Libération* or *La Croix*, and he is trying to start a group called Génération Beur, to get his friends together, he says, "in a political way." He is not talking about the politics in Algeria (although he often talks about the politics in "Palestine"). He is talking about the politics in Saint-Denis, where he says twenty-five per cent of the people are Beurs or immigrant workers. Chérif has not voted yet in Saint-Denis—he is too old, at thirty-three, to have been an "automatic Frenchman," like his brothers and sisters who were born here since 1963—but he has just got his citizenship, and now that he has it he wants to run on the Socialists' list for the Saint-Denis town council. Saint-Denis is in the *banlieue rouge*, and the Communists control the council. The town has been Communist for so long, and with such fidelity, that it does not take well to people like Nordine Chérif talking about "a new Beur politics." The Communists tolerate Arabs in Saint-Denis as long as they are Arabs like Chérif's father, who has kept his Algerian citizenship and leaves the politics of France to Frenchmen.

Chérif says sometimes that he is like the word "Beur"—"*deux fois renversé*." He means that he is having trouble deciding who he is and where he is going, but he knows that he is not going to Algeria. The life he has is his life in France. He is only seven years younger than Abdelkader Djeghloul, but Djeghloul's life is really in Oran, and he longs for home, and that—they both say this—puts them psychologically in different worlds. The problem for Chérif and his friends is not Algerian censorship or the *rapport de force* between the F.L.N. and the Algerian Army or who it was who actually sent out the soldiers to shoot at demonstrators in Algiers. The problem is being ashamed of the soldiers and still not wanting to abuse Algeria to a smug French neighbor. It has to do with explaining patiently to that neighbor that Algerians are not waiting for the second imam or the second coming, that there is a big difference between the mob in Teheran, camped outside the American Embassy, shouting "Death to Devils," and the men of Algiers on the street, praying. The problem is being French and Arab at the same time. Trying to "*conjuguer les deux*" is what Chérif's girlfriend calls it.

Chérif says that his father worked for the *mairie* in Saint-Denis for forty years, and his mother had ten children in the Saint-Denis hospital, but when they talk about their lives they always talk about "Algeria." Algeria is an imaginary place, a dream of home. In forty years, they have never suspected that home was here. This is why Chérif talks about a "*génération Beur*." He says that his parents have memories but his generation has a kind of gut collective memory—*les tripes*, he calls it—which has less to do with place than with empathy. It has to do with staking out common ground and registering voters and getting elected in Saint-Denis. The mission my friend the *conseiller* describes is here in France now.

—JANE KRAMER

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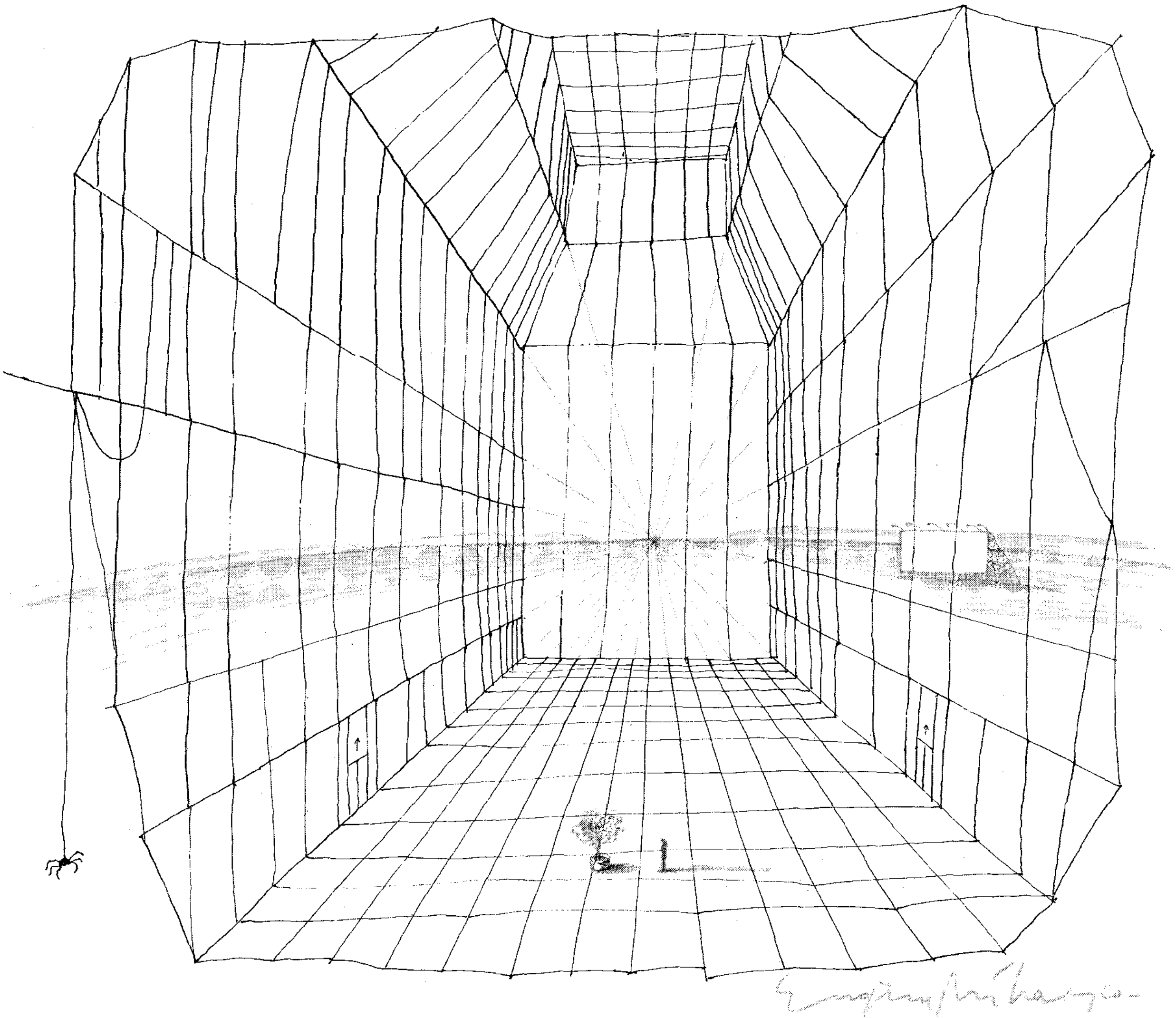


THIS hallway leads to the Sky Lobby of the Phoenix Tower, a new office building in Houston. Well, it isn't exactly new. It was completed in 1985 and has stood empty, because the economy of Texas, dependent on the health of the energy industry, has been in a crisis; so it looked *new* when it might otherwise have looked *experienced.* Its original owners ran into money troubles, and new owners took it on. In September, 1986, although it had suffered no wear, it was given a "renovation": new upon new.

In the spring of last year, I walked down this hallway to the Sky Lobby. There was a sense of utter luxury: new, rather beautiful in a cool way, and empty, utterly empty.

"The skylobby . . . was gutted to its bare structure and rebuilt from top to bottom," a press release describing the renovation of the Phoenix Tower states, and it goes on:

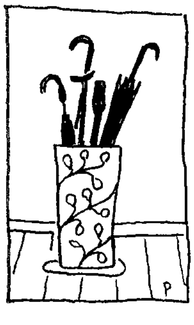
> Polished rosa porina granite, flamed with small rosettes, was used for walls and floors, adding a basic sense of warmth and strength to the area. All of the building's directional graphics were sandblasted into the granite walls. . . .
>
> A smokey grey carpet with coral accents, grey leather couches, a low glass conversation table and a rosa porina granite-topped black lacquered desk with credenza were custom made . . .
>
> The skylobby also houses a security station containing state-of-the-art television monitors, access control computers, HVAC energy management controls and a digital tenant directory housed in a custom-built granite enclosure manned round-the-clock by security supervisors.

You know how, in America, certain things are promised, over and over, and never delivered? "*The last word in luxury. Enter a private world—why settle for less? You deserve . . .*" Yet here it was, all for me, I felt: a thirty-four-story office building, ready to go—brand new, and then *renovated,* because as it was first conceived it hadn't met all my needs. I entered the Sky Lobby. "It was originally dominated by glass, chrome and a hallway of mirrors which inhibited traffic flow and conflicted with the timeless design of the exterior," the release says. I later discovered that as the office market in Houston *sorted itself out* (there had been such wild overbuilding that at the end of 1987 over thirty per cent of the available space stood empty) people in the business turned ruthlessly against chrome and glass. These people are reluctant, over all, to fix blame or accuse any specific persons or any specific human qualities—other than overzealousness and an understandable wish to do almost too well for oneself—because, after all, these people are oneself, one's employers, and so forth, and because the human qualities of zeal and enthusiasm, which created the glut of buildings, are now being put to use to try to fill them up. In this situation, people have turned against *certain building materials* (chrome and glass), and against the buildings constructed with these materials. It is as though in the midst of a financial debacle a woman blamed herself for not having stuck to haute couture; it was cheap clothes that were to blame.

The fact is that Houston has lost control of its financial institutions. Perhaps these buildings are the only new ones Houston will have for a while: this is the hand that has been dealt. The chances are that if a *really* new building were to be built—one being designed now, to open in the nineties—someone from out of state would have to approve the decision.

I did not think about this as I walked through the Sky Lobby. I thought, *How nice.* I thought about Fatehpur Sikri. Fatehpur Sikri is a wonderful city built in sandstone near Agra, in India. It was built by the conqueror Akbar on the site of the residence of a holy man who told Akbar he would have three sons. Akbar did have three sons, and he built a city in gratitude, but emotions—even gratitude—are not sufficient in the matter of city-building: there was not enough water at or near Fatehpur Sikri to support a population. But it is beautiful.

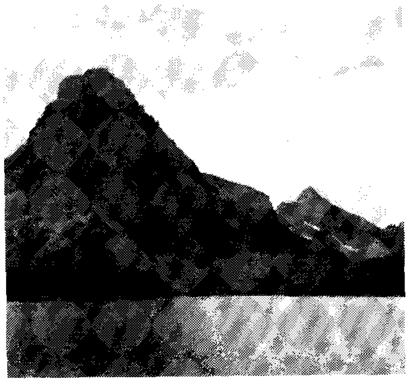
Still, Fatehpur Sikri may not be the right analogy for the Phoenix Tower. Perhaps the right one is Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri. Splendid, enormous, it was built just before the First World War; really, there weren't going to be too many more big railroad stations of this type. I remember walking through it three years ago, wishing I had seen it when it was *new*. All the big railroad stations were in trouble, more or less, by the time I got to see them.



It may not be a bad thing that there are no longer any traditions in America (on a national scale) except the economic: economic tendencies are often so violent and so full of hope and so empty of other motivation that the result is interesting, almost like art—apt to hold one's attention as certain works of art do. "What is *that*?" one asks after the announced intention is no longer plausible, or perhaps after no time at all. San Simeon, for instance: clearly the category "rich man's house" is too small to hold it.

I had a companion in Houston. He was Brian Levinson, of the Houston Economic Development Council. He is a young man, dark-haired, helpful, and enthusiastic. In the months since my return from Texas, he has sent me dozens of press releases documenting the energetic efforts of the Houston business community to deal with its economic problems. ("Houston Will Be Leading Center for Emerging Process Technologies," "Sugar Land Distribution Center Will Create 22 Jobs," "Davy McKee Corp. Opens New Corporate Office in Houston" were the headlines on three.) I was to meet him that day in the Phoenix Tower. I went into an elevator. The numbers of the floors served by the elevator were carved in granite. No chrome. As for traffic flow—really, it consisted of just me. Why should there be others? The air-conditioning was on. Who knows how many thousands of dollars it cost to keep *me* cool? The elevators were spotless. Over the elevators were new, delicate lights.

On a high floor, I was introduced to Carolyn Christian, a big, handsome young woman. A Texan, she is the senior development director of the Homart Development Company, an arm of Sears, Roebuck, which is the new owner of the Phoenix Tower. Miss Christian was such an active, friendly person it was impossible not to enjoy being with her, but she was puzzled when I told her that I liked seeing office buildings empty; in fact, she just could not seem to take it in. As many times as I praised her building for its splendid, near-absolute emptiness, so many times did she seem to imply that it was *full*, that there was emerging into the world a definition of "tenanted" which would include our building—the one we were in, the Phoenix Tower. It was miraculous: through her speech, a better world (from her point of view) took shape of its own accord around us, and as long as I didn't interrupt her this process



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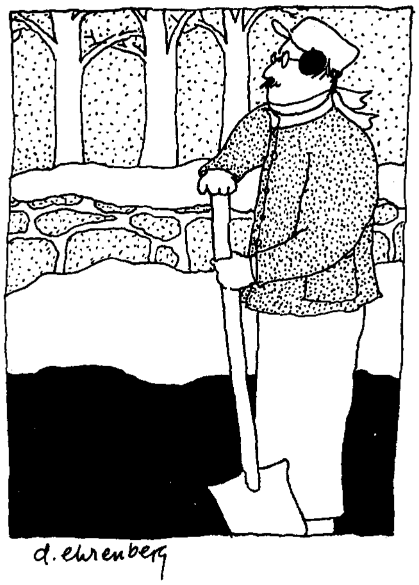
continued—to stop it would have been to cast oneself as the Grim Reaper. But I will try to give you a sense of our physical situation. There were no crowds of people in the hallway (there was no one in the hallway); we had a wonderful hush of luxurious space in Miss Christian's office; we were in cool comfort; we looked out into bright sunlight; thirty feet below, there was a beautiful garden—it all had the air of the Beverly Wilshire at dawn, with the movie people sleeping late and the servants, those wonderfully trained Mexican hotel workers, keeping out of sight. As to the garden, there was no one in it. Later, after our meeting in her office, Miss Christian and I went out into this garden, where we were, of course, alone (except for Brian Levinson), and Miss Christian made one final attempt to drag me into a sensible assessment of the situation. She said something like "I can't let you go without telling you the way I feel." It was a kind of emotional scene, really: operatic, the way things are getting to be in America, full of feeling but a little out of kilter—we were, after all, talking about different emotional reactions to empty office space. But the beautiful garden! What a setting! It was far more elaborate, so it seemed to me, than the one down the middle of Rockefeller Center; there were far more flowers, all in bloom, and, of course, I had it to myself—I mean, almost to myself.

But to get back to my meeting with Miss Christian in her office. She told me so often that the Phoenix Tower was on its way to being full that finally I had to say, "Well, I guess I don't have a story then. I'm looking for empty office buildings; I want to write only about office buildings that are more than fifty per cent empty."

"Well," she said, "we're fifty per cent rented." And then she paused. "But we're not fifty per cent *moved in*." And then it sank in that I was really serious about *liking* these empty buildings. "Gosh, all of us have been so mind-set to fill these suckers up," she said.

I OWN a book called "Hotel Planning and Outfitting." It is four hundred and thirty-eight pages long, is of a large format, is well printed on good stock with some full-page color illustrations. The illustrations are rather remarkable, done from *paintings*—"Entrance Lobby of Webster Hall," "The Hotel King Cotton, Greensboro, North Carolina," "Venetian Dining Room, Hotel Book-Cadillac, Detroit." The Hotel King Cotton is particularly strange and beautiful. A salmon-pink building, it rises, in this illustration, against a blue sky; there are violet shadows; there are cars in the foreground, and people in a dream landscape of the twenties. This book had a magical importance for me when I was young, because it showed new the things I knew old. I grew up in the nineteen-fifties, and in the early nineteen-fifties you could go to almost any American city and not see any new buildings, and if you did see any they were this utterly new thing "modern architecture." What I was seeing was cities that had been built for the most part during the nineteen-teens and twenties, and no one seemed to think anything about them. They weren't discussed and, not only that, they seemed to have been almost discredited; that is, the people I knew were interested in older things or newer things. They were angry that nineteenth-century architecture was ignored or disprized, and they were angry or hopeful about the new office buildings on Park Avenue, but they had nothing to say, really, about most of what was before my eyes, and this seemed to be true of most of what made up our country—no one had anything to say about what it was or how it had got there.

"Hotel Planning and Outfitting" seemed to me to be a valuable piece of evidence. I liked the names of the hotels—"Hotel Grim, Texarkana, Ark." (Mann & Stern, Architects); "Hotel Hanford, Mason City, Iowa" (Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, Architects)—and I found a kind of reassurance in the serious way in which the dignity of these buildings was treated. In America, most dignity is intramural (the advertising industry dignifies itself out of all proportion with awards and citations, to take one example), and I must admit that "Hotel Planning and Outfitting" was published by the Pick-Barth Companies, hotel outfitters, but, even so, I was glad to read of "The Interesting Sunken Garden of the Coronado Hotel, St. Louis, Mo.," and I looked with pleasure at "Window and Cornice Treatment—Upper Portion of Auditorium Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio." The middle part of the book consisted of black-and-white photographs of hotel interiors designed and executed by the Pick-Barth Companies. For instance: "Main Lounge in The Graemere, a Chicago Apartment Hotel" (upholstered wing chairs, divan, octagon table, damask drapes); "Grill Room, The Park Central, New York" and "Gothic Room, The Park Central, New York" (this one had a mural with knights jousting); also the Italian, French, and Arabian Rooms of the Park Central; also "The Striking Spanish Lounge" of the Gaylord, Los Angeles; also "Lobby Executed with Pueblo Indian Decoration, Hotel Franciscan, Albuquerque, N.M." and "Another View of the Interesting Lobby of the Hotel Franciscan." There were chapters on "The Hotel's Carpet Problem" and "Some Things a Hotel Man Should Know About Glassware," and there was what you might call an overview—an essay called "The Modern Commercial Hotel," which ran just opposite the beautiful color plate of the Hotel King Cotton. Here is part of it:



> It [the modern commercial hotel] is the face which the town presents to the world, an outward expression of industrial and commercial virility. The town with a good hotel is on its toes—where hotel accommodations are poor there is apathy. . . . On the other hand too many hotels develop a condition perhaps worse than too few. If, through a condition of oversupply, the local hotel industry is on a non-paying basis there will certainly follow a situation which is conducive to neither good service nor good impressions. There will be losses to local investors and a general impairment of credit when a town is placed in the category of communities which cannot support their own local institutions. . . . Still we often go on blindly building, blindly investing—primarily because a community wants a new showplace or someone wishes to sell a centrally located

building site and because a few blind investors will take the grand project on faith, hope and ultimately charity.

I AM making a list: San Simeon; hotels from the boom of the twenties; office space in Houston. Each of these, I think, implies a system.

The system implied by San Simeon is interesting because it is fanciful. It is more democratic than the system implied by the palazzi of Fifth Avenue, in that it seems to invite participation. This was the tone of the Hearst papers, of course, which specialized in patriotism and gossip: you got to *salute*, and that is participation of a kind, better than looking dumbly on. The hotels described in the Pick-Barth book seem to be an extension of the San Simeon idea—an exaggerated eclecticism—and there has been a further democratization of San Simeon: you can go there now.

What of office buildings in Houston? These buildings and the landscape they create represent half of a *split*. The obviously vulgar, fantastic half of the tradition is absent, or almost absent, or is about to be banished—to the Disney parks, I think—but the dominant theme, which is the social aspiration of business to express itself and to achieve a work of the imagination, is here. My grandmother was a woman who knew how to *dress*. This is America: our achievements are often *peripheral*, however central we feel we have been. We are a nation enclosed in a beautiful line of talk—or an ugly one. The high art in Texas is the business conversation. An office building in Houston (the Phoenix Tower, for instance) is the business conversation seeking to express itself as art; an evanescent thing eager to be seen; a process *toward* an end eager to *be* an end; an expression of optimism eager to be its own proof.

Like "Star Wars," the wonderful overdevelopment of office space in Houston was based on a "what if" conversation, and beyond that lay a series of conjectures (about what businessmen call "the oil corridor") that constituted a kind of story, a fairy tale that would sort people out; that is, as in a fairy story, a successful person would react one way to the set of clues presented by the landscape (in this case, the landscape was a series of conjectures about a *possible* landscape), while another person would fail the test. This is how the situation was perceived by Texans six or seven years ago, but the circumstances of the story changed, to reward other qualities than the ones the original set of conjectures seemed to require. *That* situation seemed to require audacity and "boldness of vision." The story at the heart of the business conversation as it unfolds in Houston today requires (or reveals) *prudence* as the basis for success. The hero is a different man now. Nobody questions the story, however.

Perhaps the two stories (the one that seemed to be present in the set of conjectures and the one that has emerged up through the earth, as it were, in the landscape that really exists today in Houston) can be told best, in brief, by referring to two phrases; that is, if I were really to write a fairy story about the boom and bust in Houston during this decade I would postulate two men—brothers, perhaps, the sons of a rich old Texan—who both went to consult a sibyl and, because of their different characters, came away with different answers. I think of Jesse Jones, the old-fashioned Houston patriarch, as the father ("Get to be as rich and as prominent as I was" was his instruction), and Gerald Hines, the developer, as the sibyl. Hines built the Galleria, a complex of stores, on a site that was regarded (in the nineteen-seventies) as very far west of the old Houston downtown. This was his "vision" (as it has been interpreted by other ambitious men): that if you built big and well you could build away from downtown.

People have built all over in Houston. There are big office towers at Northwest Crossing, for instance, north of the city. From high up in a downtown office building (or from the Transco Tower, for instance, a sixty-four-story skyscraper in Hines's Galleria district), one sees a remarkable sight: low, flat land and then, suddenly, an eruption of towers. There is no zoning in Houston—it is the only important American city to build without some serious restrictive guide to development—and almost anything can happen anywhere. (I think of Tuscany when I think of Houston: city-states, some of great beauty—I regard Houston as a place of real beauty in its strangeness—appear on a landscape where a non-urban spirit is also honored and is in force.) One night, I

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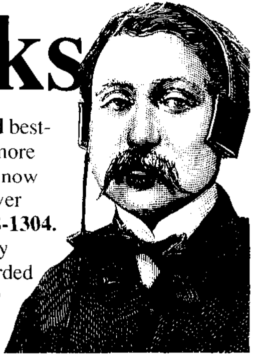

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went to a funky little crawfish fry at a funky little establishment near the intersection of two interstates. It was like an inn in a picaresque novel: different aspects of the city were being illuminated—cars were rushing by on the big roads, clusters of office towers stood all around, sparkling and new, and this crawfish fry was going on, unself-consciously, as the expression of some folk life beneath everything else. I went back to my hotel, a splendid old place in which the Mecom family (long prominent) had installed beautiful carved panelled doors (from the Hôtel Murat in Paris), to say nothing of a glass-fronted cabinet filled with *crowns*, and I was violently ill; the crawfish, I think, were to blame.

To return to the two stories and the two phrases. In my scheme, one son of the rich old man pursues the example of Hines's success and comes away with a story, which is the story of the *oil corridor:* how, inevitably, Interstate 10, which runs west from Louisiana to Houston, and then west into Texas, will fling prosperity at those who adhere to a belief—a belief in oil, a belief in the *oil corridor*, a belief in the processes of belief. The other son also looks closely at what Hines has done, but he comes away with a simple homily: "Make sure you have an *anchor tenant*." This son is perceived today as being in the best tradition.

I WANT now to talk about *words* —about how words influence, or can influence, action. I don't believe that the landscape of Houston would look the way it does if the particular phrase "oil corridor" had not been there to describe the vector that people were riding, and I don't think that the optimism that comforts Texans now would seem so nourishing as they seek to assemble a sensible landscape from what has been flung at them (or from what they have produced themselves by flailing around) if they did not have the phrase "anchor tenant." There is an area out along Interstate 10, very far west, called Westchase—a kind of miniature White Plains, only better—that is all ready to go, with office buildings, hotels, shopping districts, and even helicopter-landing facilities. Westchase is struggling today to find a reason to exist at all, though reasons were beautifully and wonderfully available while the phrase "oil corridor" still had magic. And there are, it seems, almost no lengths to which the owners of a building or their agents will not go these days in order to capture an "anchor tenant" for a building; the Italian developer Giorgio Borlenghi, the owner of a huge complex of commercial towers near the Galleria, bought a building so that its principal tenant could be moved into one of his new, empty buildings. *That* is what is called a *very* creative deal.

The city itself seems to be a line of talk; I mean, these buildings seem to be words in a certain kind of business conversation, which is still going on, and to which the participants are devoted.

Here is part of a real conversation. I am sitting in the office of Jim Peters, a senior vice-president of Cushman & Wakefield, talking to Warren Savery, a Houston real-estate broker whose firm handles the leasing of space from Borlenghi. We are on the thirteenth floor of an office tower at 1300 Post Oak Boulevard, near the Galleria. It is a magnificent new building, categorically *not* empty—this due in part to Mr. Savery's efforts. No. 1300 is part of a complex of buildings put up by Mr. Borlenghi. Mr. Savery says, "Giorgio had an in-house group that really had not been as successful as he would have liked. And he explained to me that the reason he didn't go with a third-party company on the front end was he didn't want to offend anybody, *and* he really didn't know who were the better firms. At any rate, we came on in 1984. About ten million square feet of space was leased in the Greater Houston area that year, and one million was leased here."

As to the *setting*, this building is very luxurious: what is called in Houston an "A" building. And this is what I mean: All this building, all this talk, is a kind of dance, a social event. It is intended to do something *socially*. What has happened in the Houston real-estate business since Mr. Savery began to work for Giorgio Borlenghi in 1984 is that "A" buildings have robbed "B" buildings of their tenants. "A" buildings continue to justify the dance, so to speak; they make a certain kind of conversation possible. Otherwise, we would be talking about a commodity, and we are not doing that yet.

What I mean is that in a commercial culture it is very important that *the commodity* not be just a commodity. In a socialist country, too (a thing it is almost impossible to find), a commodity is still not just a commodity; it is a thing geared to the needs of the people—something also, perhaps, taken away from someone else. Always, everywhere, a commodity is not just a commodity; it is also an idea. But in America the situation is aggravated by the fact of advertising. Before any commodity is mentioned, a submissive, stimulating generalization is laid beneath the message: WE ARE HERE TO GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT. Ah, but what is wanted isn't only the *thing*, we the somewhat reluctant prospect allow it to be known. What is it, then, that we want as well? To be allowed to speak of oneself as though one were important when, perhaps, one has done nothing important. I think "to speak" is the crucial phrase here. In Mr. Savery's speech I notice courtesy and sense, and a happy outcome. One must, in the end, be able to speak of oneself in this way, I think. It is the requirement. When I said that it is important that *the commodity* not be just a commodity, I meant that goods are always in a hierarchy, as speech is. All stores are justified by Bendel's, and that is why the "A" buildings are full in Houston.

And yet not *all* the "A" buildings are full. It was Mr. Savery's firm that handled the transaction by which Mr. Borlenghi bought a building to acquire an "anchor tenant"—Union Texas Petroleum. The Phoenix Tower is what you might call an "A-minus" building. And there is in downtown Houston a building called Heritage Plaza, fifty-three stories high, which you might call an "A-plus" building: at the time of my visit it was ninety-two per cent empty, because the developers had gone ahead with their project when the bust had already come (they are famous for having said that they hoped to find "a window in the market"), and because they were holding out for an "anchor tenant." Heritage Plaza was ghostly, dim, forbidding—and sad.

THE national destiny is usually discussed in terms of prosperity and fairness—sometimes it's prosperity on the one hand, fairness on the other. I think that, secretly, we are interested in neither of these ideas (although as a practical matter we want some money and personally we like to be fair). I think we are looking for the next vector—that is, the force we can ride through our everyday landscape so we don't have to look at it. Possibly we want a world in which all action will be brave, something that will win admiration. I decided to look at Houston's landscape in heroic terms.

I set out to look at buildings. It was like looking for people: you had heard that a certain person lived, strangely, in a certain place. I did it by instinct. I had seen the city from above, and the underlying economic forces had been described to me. I had *heard* the conversation, and I set out. I had been given some guidance. Brian Levinson had shown me my first "knockdown"—a residential complex on Westheimer Road. A "knockdown" is a new building that it is cheaper to demolish than to let stand. And he had taken me to Westchase.

Now let me describe the first empty building I found while I was out by myself; it was the eeriest of all the buildings I saw in Houston. It was the kind of building that had been described to me as a "C" building, and it was faced with mirrored glass. It looked like a pariah. I had been warned against this kind of building so forcefully that it looked to me like a criminal, a representative of all the forces endangering the city. It stood (at the corner of Dolores Street and Chimney Rock Road) in a simple residential neighborhood; across Dolores Street was a small house in a small fenced yard. As I walked by the yard, an angry dog barked. Life. There was no life that I could see in the big building itself. It was six stories tall, and it looked a way I had never seen a building look. It looked like a failed *car*, a gas guzzler during a fuel crisis—like that. Suddenly, no one wanted it *at all*. Better to be the barking dog than a person involved in *that* building. One more thing: when you looked east along Dolores Street (the small houses on the left, the empty office building on the right), you could see the Transco Tower, the big new "A" skyscraper in the Galleria zone. It was *medieval*. I felt that I was outside the walls looking toward a place where there was real protection available to citizens like me. I wanted to be near, or *in*, the Transco Tower rather than where I was, which

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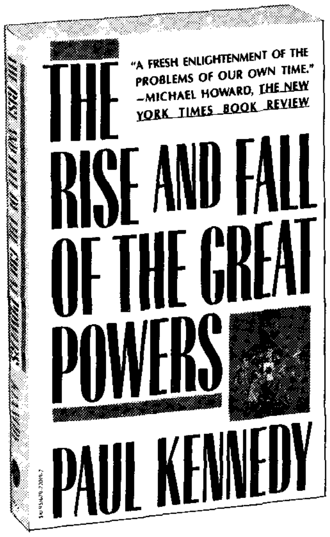
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was in a kind of empty land of threat.

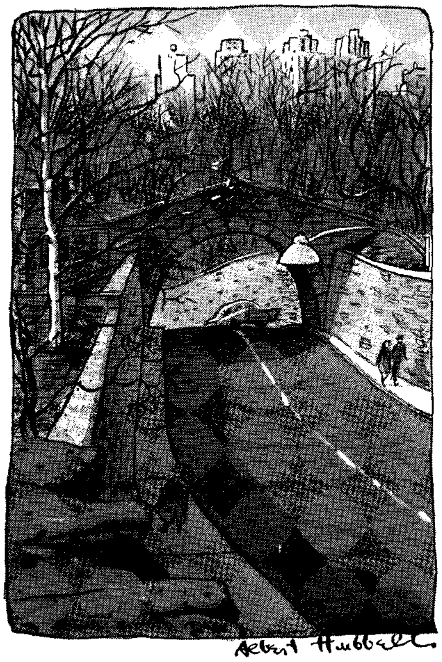
There was forty million square feet of unoccupied office space in Houston at the time of my visit. I had planned to go to Dallas, too, but I couldn't find real-estate people who were willing to receive me. The situation there is desperate, too, and they do not have, in Dallas, Houston's kind of optimism; things are more protected in Dallas, less open. Texas has a simple tradition of victory. One set of masculine values has predominated.

I drove to the district called Northwest Crossing. There are some big buildings here that have been empty but are filling up, and many, many small developments that are utterly desolate. These are the kind of buildings that should house professionals or small "high tech" manufacturers but do not. I had the medieval feeling again at Northwest Crossing. Not only were there big buildings in oval shapes, rather like castles (they reminded me of the strange villages south of Sparta, in Greece, where clusters of towers, each one the home of a family, stand together without making contact with one another), but I came upon a strip of empty small offices which had a crenellated roof. I took a photograph of this, and when I had the picture developed I saw, reflected in the strip's mirrored glass, the image of an older building across the street, done in an echo of the adobe style of the Southwest, which can also have the aspect of a fort.

The human mind tends to skip and skitter, while optimism, which is not a thought but an emotional color, remains (or can remain in some people) consistent, so that one may be optimistic at one moment about living in a community so secure in the way it protects its "values" that no overt protection is necessary, and at the next moment one is energetically rallying oneself to live in an armed camp. It is a characteristic of one small group of people to be interested in why such a change (from unprotected to fully armed) should be necessary, and a characteristic of another, much larger group to find this question a waste of energy. It always seems to this larger group, whether it is making lots of money or losing it, that energy is in short supply and is needed for more important things than thinking, so that no energy, or almost none, ever seems to be free to fill in those places where the mind skips—to examine the flow of things.

ON my last day in Houston, I had an appointment with a real-estate broker called Buddy Clemons, who had promised to show me through the Rice Hotel. Mr. Clemons is in his fifties and is an old Houstonian, and the firm he works for, the Horne Company, is a prominent one. As a broker, the Horne Company handles "A" buildings only, and has done so with success. When I talked with the head of the firm, he told me that it had just about filled up 1600 Smith, a new "A" building that had been giving it some trouble, and that now most of the buildings it handled as leasing agent were filled. (Here is another distinction: a prominent firm, like Horne, will handle only "A" buildings as a leasing agent; as a *manager*, however, it handles many troubled buildings that have reverted to the mortgage holder or, perhaps, to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.) In this situation, Mr. Clemons has a special position, one that is, to all appearances, congenial to him. He brokers, among others, two big old buildings in the old downtown which are not only empty but in need of renovation. The Rice is one of these.

I have a booklet put out by the Rice. It is aqua in color. It has no date on it, but I would guess by the style that it's from the late fifties or early sixties. It looks like VistaVision, if you know what I mean. Everything is portrayed as "modern." On page 3 of the booklet is a photograph of the Rice's exterior (the Rice was built by Jesse Jones, the patriarch, on the site of the Capitol of the Republic of Texas, and had a kind of official importance in Texas; it is of the era and in the style of the boom hotels pictured in the Pick-Barth book), but given equal prominence are photographs of a "Drive-in Motor Lobby" and something called the "Television Registration Desk." It is as though the Rice were a little ashamed of being the Rice. And yet being the Rice was, after all, what the Rice had to offer, so this booklet (unlike the Pick-Barth book) seems slightly conflicted, slightly *split*. There are evocations of a proud heritage ("Flag Room . . . a unique combination of incomparable cuisine, service and an atmosphere that makes dining a memorable event. Setting the motif for the room are the six flags that have flown over Texas [Spanish, French, Mexican, Republic of Texas, Confederate, and United States]. One of the nation's finest restaurants. . . . [The Rice] is actually part of a tradition as old as Texas"), but also a strange *unsureness*. Consider, for example, the text describing the "Television Registration Desk":



> Closed-circuit television lets you select your accommodations from 1,000 guest rooms and suites. A private elevator takes you to the main building, eliminating any need for going through the main lobby.

Not go through the main lobby? *Why not*? Well, because it's a little dull. (Somewhat the way *chrome and glass* on the façade of an office building are now.)

I walked through the Rice with Mr. Clemons and Weidy Weidman. (Weidy and his three assistants are the only ones working in the hotel these days.) We walked down a long red corridor. I looked into a room with dusty red leather banquettes. This was the Flag Room. "That was our gourmet dining room," Weidy said. We turned a corner and looked into a room with more banquettes. It was gloomy. "This was a private club, the old Capitol Club," Weidy said.

"Which was your favorite room?" I asked.

"All of 'em," Weidy said.

"When did you come here first?" I asked.

"In 1938."

"Where were you before that?"

"Well, I was in high school. I just graduated. Old Sam Houston Central." He turned to Mr. Clemons. "You remember Central High?"

"Oh, yeah," Mr. Clemons said. "Dad went to Central."

We went to the second floor to look into the Crystal Ballroom. Mr. Clemons said that the Crystal Ballroom had been the masterpiece of the hotel, and he showed us a picture of the way it had been in the nineteen-twenties. "Any developer would want to take it back to that now," he said. Interestingly, this room does not appear in the Rice booklet, which stresses instead the Grand Ballroom, a later addition, described as "unquestionably one of the world's most beautiful rooms." The Grand Ballroom is utterly forlorn now (I saw it later), and Mr. Clemons would not take a guess as to its future.

"These things are still up there." We were still looking at the old photograph. The photograph showed an elegant American neoclassical ballroom with a coffered ceiling and oriel windows. Weidy was pointing to the windows in the picture.

"They are above this ceiling?" I asked. The room had a dropped ceiling, from the fifties.

"The air ducts are in 'em now," Weidy said.

I spotted two murals in the photograph, one high on the north wall, and one high on the south. They seemed, as far as I could tell, to be on the theme of abundance—something like that. Weidy saw where I was looking.

"I still have that mural. It's locked up in a closet," he said.

"In this hotel?" I asked.

He nodded. "But the other one—There's one on each end."

"You feel that it's still up there?"

"That one is. This one was removed."

"But you have it?"

"It's got some holes punched in it, because they had those metal laths that go through"—Weidy was smiling—"and the metal-lath mechanic, he just punched holes in it. It's got quite a few holes in it."

"Do you know what it shows? What it looked like?"

"No."

We examined it, the three of us, peering down at the photograph.

"Like people are dancing, and it has some . . ." Weidy paused and looked again.

Mr. Clemons said, "It's hard to tell."

"AND this was the Rice Roof," Mr. Clemons said. Big, and with glass everywhere, the Rice Roof took up the top floor of the hotel, and felt to me like an ocean liner—all sunshine, and running on something unseen, like an ocean, below. Mr. Clemons, a friendly, interested man, seemed to be bigger, more of a presence, here on the Roof. First, we walked out over one wing, and then out over another. He said, "The Petroleum Club was here last. And then the Petroleum Club moved to the Exxon Building. And they were the last private— The last ones that occupied— This was later converted to the Ames Brothers' night club." We were walking toward a wall.

"See the gold record?" Weidy asked me. As I got closer, I could see that there were emblems of hit records on the wall, and *musical notation;* the wall had been decorated to represent a page of sheet music. Weidy was looking at a gold-colored emblem. "This is their design," he said. "They lasted—what? Nine months, in the fifties. I think they played— I think they were here for nine months."

FINALLY, I would like to report on a space that was *not* empty. This was the Brown Convention Center, a huge building that stands like a dam or a bookend on the east side of town. (It seems to be putting a *hold* on something, rather than making way for any kind of *corridor*.) I went inside. From the second level one could look into a huge space below. Here there were people—hundreds, perhaps a thousand, of them, each one bent over a desk, writing. I was not alone. A mature black woman stood next to me. She had a camera. She was worried that if she took a picture it would somehow disturb the people below. I encouraged her to take the picture, and she did. We looked at all the people. From a notice I had seen below, I knew that they were taking an examination to be accepted as Certified Public Accountants by the State of Texas. "I never saw so many people *testing*," the woman said.

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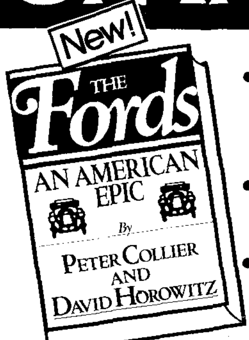

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A Fresh Start

Edna O'Brien's new novel, "The High Road" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18.95), begins with fear and ends with a kind of banishment. In between are sex (or the promise of it or the memory of it) and despair. This is one of O'Brien's woman-on-holiday stories—like her 1965 novel, "August Is a Wicked Month," and several of her best short stories—and the point, as always, is that it's not so easy to get away from ourselves. Anna, the narrator of "The High Road," is a middle-aged woman of Irish descent who's on the run from a painfully busted affair. The novel opens with Anna waking, alone and disoriented, in an unfamiliar room: "My hand went instinctively toward the bedside table only to find that there was no lamp, nor table where a lamp could be, and then slowly and unnervingly it came to me that I was not at home, that I had come to this place, this new place, and gradually I remembered my walk of the evening before, the strange town, a mountain, and now this intemperate roar while it was still dark." She is, it turns out, on an island: one of those sunny Mediterranean places filled with tourists from the Continent, leisure-dazed specimens of the upper class, and sluggish, vaguely "artistic" expatriates. In her emotionally numbed state, this woman can't seem to find anything restorative, or even anything particularly new, as she moves from one lodging to another, trying to locate a room that will give her both comfort and the sense of a fresh start. When she's alone, she's subject to terrors and morbid flashbacks to the end of her romance; but the company of other people is just as bad—everyone she meets is like a carnival-mirror distortion, a grotesque image of what she could become. She just doesn't know where in the world she is; what she sees when she looks around her is beautiful but indistinct.

That's pretty much the way we feel, too, for at least the first third of this book. The hazy beauty of the prose is about all we can be sure of. O'Brien, writing her first novel in eleven years, takes her time settling back into the once familiar form. She dawdles over the landscape, shifts tones promiscuously from comic to melancholy and back again, strews minor characters all over the place, while keeping us guessing about her attitude toward her heroine. It's almost as if she were doing exercises, trying out her various gifts while she searches for her novelist's voice. And we don't mind, because the drifting course of the narration seems exactly right for the heroine's (and perhaps the writer's) state of mind: the style is tentative but expectant, alert with both anxiety and desire. The opening chapters of "The High Road" turn arbitrariness into an exquisite kind of tension.

What's exciting about the novel is that O'Brien never does fully resolve the tension. The story becomes, eventually, more linear—it follows the developing relationship between Anna and a young island woman named Catalina, who works at her hotel—yet we feel more and more uncomfortable and unsure of things as the book goes along. O'Brien is (has always been) a deceptive writer. She comes on very strong, with language that means to overwhelm, to seduce: its rhythms are insistent, and what's carried on her relentless waves of prose is most often some grand emotion, outsize and naked and almost punishingly clear. Here, for instance, is her description of Anna's reaction to a bunch of flowers that Catalina has left in her hotel room:

> My room was in semidarkness and yet I could see the flowers, feel them as if they were breathing. It was a fresh bunch, so beautiful, so immense that I knelt before it as at an altar. Opening the shutters, I saw they were sweet peas—airy, rampant, glorious; she had included every color: red, deep purple, pale purple, pink, and white. They were in such profusion it was as if they had not been plucked from their high, thin, curving stalks but had grown like that, in a shoal, a wayward profusion. She had added sprigs of myrtle, its pungent smell an echo of the forest, in contrast to the soft airy smell of the flowers.
>
> I hurried out of the room to thank her, buoyed now with some purpose. She was not to be seen. The flowers were piled one on top of the other, great breathing bunches, waiting for her hands to pick them up and separate them, to take the roses and pull them gently apart, the red, and the white, and the yellow roses, and to take the remainder of the sweet peas, which would be bruised if they were left to lie there too long; to put the tall, chaste, waxen lilies into tall, chaste jars.

This is not cautious writing. If we take it at face value, it's too urgent, too detailed, too rapturous for the simple event it's describing. But it is also, in its manic overelaboration, a perfect representation of the narrator's emotional state: in every run-on sentence we feel the hurtling, undirected energy of a very needy woman, a woman who's desperate to work herself up to an epiphany. We may notice, too, that the girl, Catalina, whose job it is to put

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flowers in the guests' rooms, is a symbol before she's a character; instead of life she has meaning. She's idealized, as if she were herself a flower—as if the sole point of her existence were to refresh the senses of a depressed tourist.

O'Brien is trying to do something terribly difficult in "The High Road": to tell an ironic story in a romantic style. Over all, her heroine behaves pretty abominably. Anna seems to think that her suffering gives her the right to sniff around in other people's lives, to dig up the secret sources of their pain: early on, she's caught rifling the bedroom of the woman she's sharing a house with; later, she caps an evening of drinking at the villa of a silly, vain Englishwoman by listening, alone, to the taped suicide message of the woman's son. And her wooing of Catalina is conducted with remarkable heedlessness, a near-complete indifference to the disapproving gaze of the rather primitive island society, which only the girl actually has to live in. Anna can treat the object of her affection to long lunches at fancy restaurants without suffering any real consequences; she's on holiday from her dreary life, and doesn't care if her behavior looks a little scandalous. In some sense, O'Brien's heroine is a monster—a woman made grotesquely selfish by disappointment—yet the language doesn't work to distance us from her. It draws us in, immerses us in the slosh of her emotions. The voice that O'Brien has given to Anna is an insinuating, persuasive one: her perceptions are (though selective) amazingly acute, and her feelings are (though not always admirable) recognizable and delicately nuanced. We're never allowed to feel just one way about this woman. Her resilience gives her dignity, and O'Brien's words even give the character a peculiar beauty; this isn't the way literary irony usually works.

There's a crucial paradox at the heart of this rich, impossibly problematic novel: the novelist is trying to find herself (again) by means of a character who's in headlong flight from herself. In her long career as a writer of fiction (ten novels and dozens of short stories since 1960), O'Brien has demonstrated a peerless understanding of two apparently contradictory kinds of women. There are the passive types, like Kate, of "The Country Girls Trilogy," and the heroine of "A Pagan Place," who

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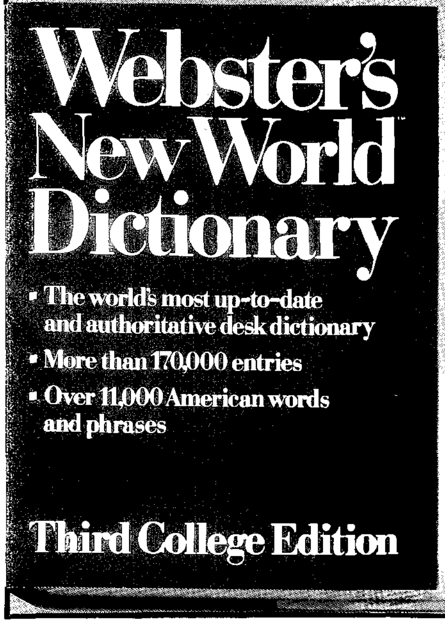

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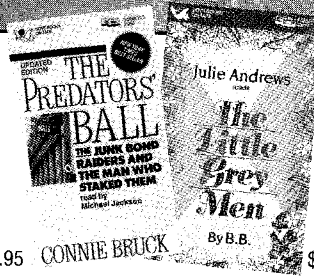

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seem trapped by their sensitive natures and their eagerness to conform to others' expectations, women stuck in the mud of home; and there are those, like Mary Hooligan, in "Night," and Baba, of the trilogy, whose joys lie in transgression, willful scandalizing. O'Brien herself, in her fiction, is clearly a bit of both—obsessed with re-creating the memories of a repressive Irish Catholic youth and also with exploring, in sometimes uncomfortable detail, the agony and delight of uninhibited sensuality. Her style reflects a similar tension: she's a superb craftsman of traditional English realistic fiction, yet there's always something wild and unmannerly—Celtic in the best, most primitive sense—trying to break the surface. The conflicts in her nature have always been more evident in her novels than in her stories, some of which achieve an almost unseemly lyrical perfection. The eleven years that have passed between her ninth novel ("I Hardly Knew You") and her tenth represent, in a way, a period of retreat for O'Brien—of partial withdrawal from the messier emotions of her extended fictions. She has returned with a book that's as adventurous and disturbing as anything she has ever done—convincing proof that she has no interest in reconciling the paradoxical urges that drive her, or in settling into the comfortable groove of the established writer, endlessly reformulating her familiar self.

Far from it. By telling her story from the point of view of the confused and desperate, and irritating, Anna, O'Brien so complicates our reactions that even apparently easy metaphors turn dangerous, double-edged. Those flowers, for instance, and Catalina herself, and everything else that, in O'Brien's lush descriptions, seems to represent the island's "simple" beauties (in contrast to the muddle of the heroine's ordinary urban life)—none of them are quite so simple. The glories of the island are real, and so is Anna's need for renewal, but her attitude is made suspect by the urgency of that need. The island culture is just the sort of suspicious, backward, intolerant society that O'Brien has, in her evocations of small-town Irish life, always portrayed as a death trap—but does Anna, a woman on holiday from her sophisticated sorrows, have the right to behave as if this alien culture simply didn't exist for her, as if she could blithely take from it whatever she wants, without being scrutinized or judged? It's clear that Anna, despite being virtually exiled from the island in the end, has really been refreshed—been made to feel more alive—by the intensity of her experiences on holiday. It's equally clear that the reawakening of her senses has had a price: her actions, in this social setting, have catastrophic results. O'Brien has probably never created a character more deeply divided—both in herself and in the meaning she carries for the reader. Through Anna, the writer seems to be engaging in a thorough examination of herself, and to be inviting us to join in. The novel, with its killingly gorgeous prose, even calls its own beauty into question: the heroine's "high road," the romantic sensibility and the love of pure beauty which lead to her obsession with Catalina, is treacherous and maybe a little inhuman. "The High Road" is beautiful but radically—and self-consciously—impure. O'Brien might almost be telling us, half apologetically, where she has been for the past eleven years—on holiday from something essential in herself, pursuing an ideal of form—and saying goodbye to all that, returning to her difficult, unsolid home ground, with the intemperate roar still ringing in her ears. This isn't by any means a completely satisfying novel, but its confusions are expressive, unsettling in weirdly memorable ways. Its mixture of self-regard and self-loathing is somehow elating. "The High Road" is the work of a writer who's still, after all these years, trying to resist the lure of islands—the confining one she was born on, the liberating ones where she holidays, and even the lovely island of language she has made for herself to live on.

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

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Tullahoma, because of its geographical location, is approximately 75 miles from Nashville.—*Larry Taft in the Nashville (Tenn.) Tennessean.*

That's how it goes with geography.

•

Edward W. Chester, a conservative historian at the University of Texas, said it is too early to evaluate Reagan. But, echoing many of his academic colleagues, he said, "The deficit does bother me. The deficit does bother me."—*Missoula (Mont.) Missoulian.*

Enough echoing already.

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19	17	14	m	Flaam, Aurlandsfjord Gudvangen, Naeroyfjord
20	18	15	t	Kristiansund, Norway Cruise Inside Passage
21	19	16	w	Cross Arctic Circle Afternoon cruise of Holandsfjord with Svartisen Glacier Evening cruise the Raftsund
22	20	17	th	Gravdal, Norway
24	22	19	s	Hellesylt, Geirangerfjord Geiranger
25	23	20	su	Bergen, Norway
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	AUG		
4	1	t	sail
5	2	w	Stockholm, Sweden
7	4	f	sail
8	5	s	Visby, Sweden
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SEP	2	s	sail
SEP	3	su	Malaga, Spain Motril, Spain
SEP	4	m	Ibiza, Spain
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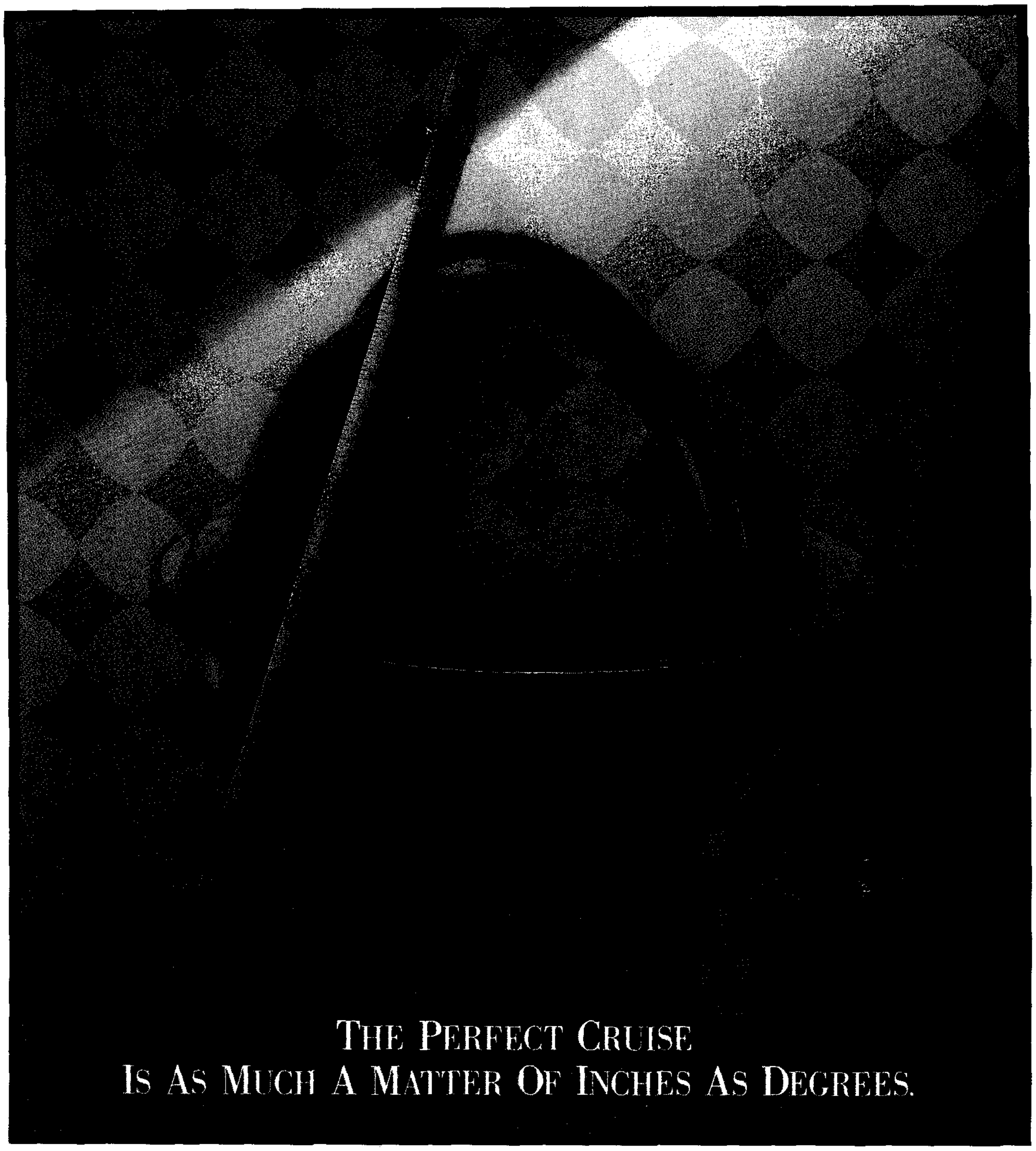

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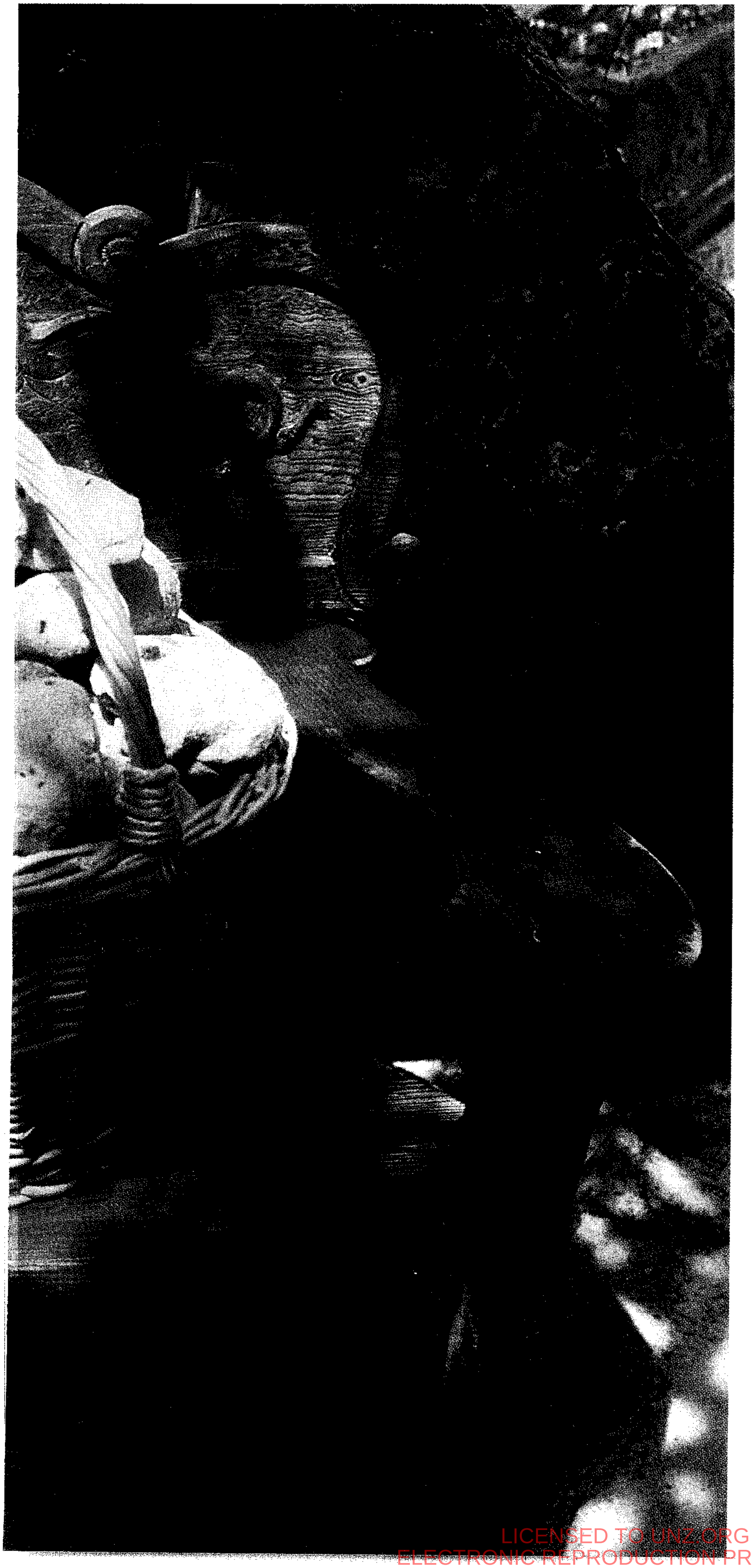

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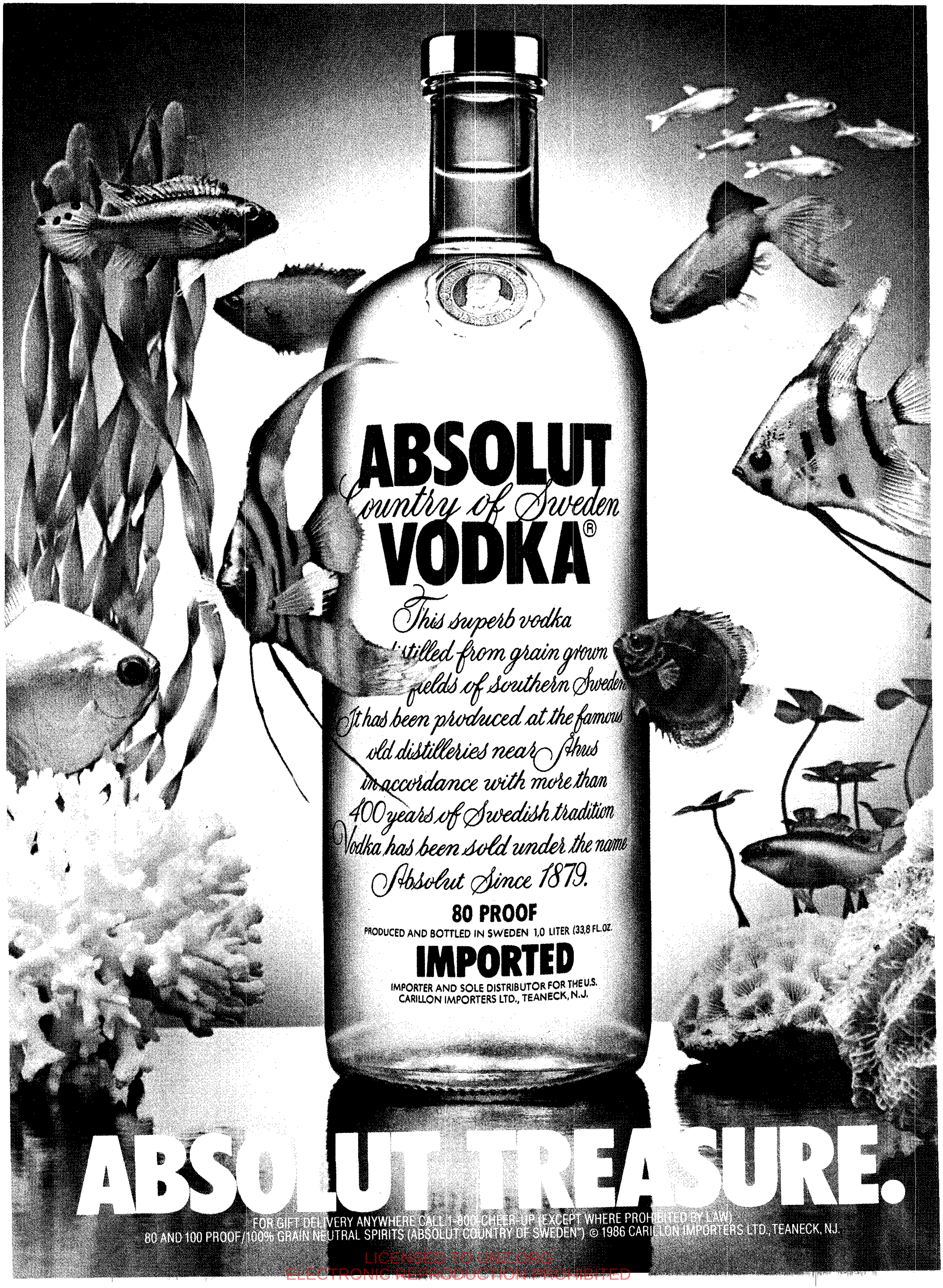
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